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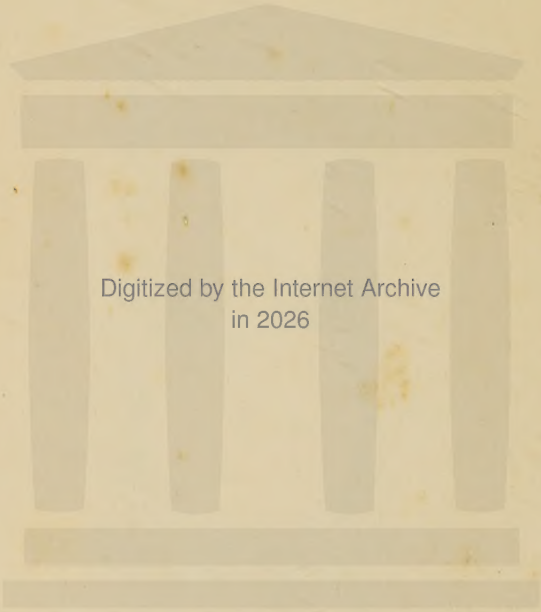

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THE HOUSEHOLD OF SIR THOMAS MORE

The Family of Sir Thomas More

THE HOUSEHOLD OF SIR THOMAS MORE BY ANNE MANNING WITH INTRODUCTION BY RICHARD GARNETT

ALEXANDER MORING LIMITED THE DE LA MORE PRESS 32 GEORGE STREET HANOVER SQUARE LONDON W 1905

Libellus a Margareta More
Quindecim annos nata
Chelseae inceptus

INTRODUCTION

THERE is no trait more characteristic of refined and superior natures than the aspiration to penetrate the history of the past, and not merely to know the conspicuous achievements of those whom they have venerated on moral grounds, or merely admired as picturesque figures, but to enter so far into their intimacy as to be able to realise the tenor of their daily lives. History can accomplish but little towards this end—the endeavour would divert her from her proper function, and load her page with insignificant details. Biography can do more; autobiography, if perfectly candid, more still. But Pepyses are not numerous. It has, therefore, been found necessary to invoke the aid of fiction, and create the historical novel —a class of composition disparaged by superfine criticism as inaccurate and misleading, but too deeply rooted in human nature to be ever abolished. It is, in fact, but another form of tragedy, which, as the circumstances of his own day, encumbered as they are with trivialities, rarely impress the poet's imagination with

sufficient power to produce anything greater than melodrama, must in general be historical. The slow metamorphosis of the drama into the novel naturally brought the historical novel along with it, though this would appear to have been one of fiction's latest developments. Controversy soon arose between the artist who was content if he could represent the spirit and the exterior vesture of a period with substantial correctness and the antiquary who insisted on rigid accuracy of detail. To meet the criticism of the latter class a further refinement was devised. The historical novelist had been wont to display himself in the light of a spectator and reporter. He placed himself, in imagination, beside a particular epoch, and described what he beheld. He did not profess to be himself an actor in his own theatre, nor did he in the least shrink from giving his own view of the transactions he was relating, conceived and expressed in the spirit of his own times. Bulwer's "Last of the Barons," for example, is designed to interpret the fifteenth century to the nineteenth, and Kingsley's "Hypatia" is as much a manifesto of the Broad Church as any of his tracts or sermons. But in the development to which we have alluded, of which Margaret Roper's imaginary diary is a distinguished example, the

novelist vacates the field altogether, and the chief personage of the fiction is supposed to relate the tale in his or her own language.

This evidently greatly increases the difficulty of composition. The ordinary historical novelist does not seek to reproduce the language of the period he depicts, although he will endeavour to tinge his own style with appropriate hues, and avoid anachronistic modernisms. But to place the narrative in the mouth of one of the personages, and even more when it is represented as a transcript from a diary or other written document, as in the case of Margaret Roper, is to court an ordeal to which hardly any knowledge or ingenuity could be equal, the closeness of the facsimile depending less upon the felicity of particular words and phrases than upon the general undefinable aroma. Perhaps the most successful instance of such an illusion is George Darley's beautiful lyric in the manner of the seventeenth century, "It is not beauty I demand," which imposed for years not merely upon the compiler of "The Golden Treasury," but upon his readers. Here, however, the deception only needed to be kept up for a few stanzas, and the discovery brought with it the detection of little flaws which ought to have betrayed the innocent imposture much sooner.

No reader of "Margaret Roper" will proceed far without recognising that the language is not that of the time of Henry VIII., and that the ideas transcend the sphere of even a Lord Chancellor's daughter of that age. The failure is rather in phrases than in single words, such collocations as "living consciousness," "dreamless sleep," "disembodied spirit," would scarcely have occurred to Mistress Roper or her contemporaries; while the expressions which they would have used would probably have perplexed the modern reader. The lesser evil has been chosen, but the fact that it is an evil shows that the problem is not susceptible of a satisfactory solution. No conceivable skill could have overcome the difficulty, and to have merely evaded it by avoiding all ideas incapable of expression in language equally natural to Mistress Roper and intelligible to ourselves, would have been to have reduced the book to a *caput mortuum* of insipidity. True art has no insoluble problems; we may hence conclude that the device of bringing past ages nearer to us by copying the diction of their ordinary life, even though, as here, performed with ingenuity and good taste, is not legitimate art. In a certain measure it may be compared to the historical drama, where the action is carried on by coævals speaking as from themselves, the dramatist

being entirely ignored. But no tragic dramatist ever attempted to make his personages not only express the sentiments proper to their parts, but employ the very diction which would have been employed by their originals. In comic drama this would be legitimate, as it would achieve the comic dramatist's purpose by raising a laugh, the last thing desired by the author of "Margaret Roper."

Although, however, the device of putting a story of the past not only into the mouth but into the tongue of a principal actor must be condemned as inartistic in itself and as incapable of satisfactory execution, it may be a considerable assistance to the popularity of the book. Especially is this the case where the fiction does not depend upon striking incident but upon quiet, domestic portraiture. The attempt to represent a Margaret Roper or a Mary Powell speaking and writing as they really spoke and wrote does bring the personages into closer relation with the reader, and quickens his conception, much as the comprehension of the printed word is aided by clever book illustrations. In "Margaret Roper" it is very needful that we should imbibe the atmosphere environing the heroine as far as possible, for the author has made a point of avoiding all picturesque description and striking incident. For these there

were ample opportunities. A Bulwer or an Ainsworth would have arrested More before our eyes, clinked his manacles audibly in the Tower, made us attendants at his trial, and spectators at his execution. Such a writer would have profited to the utmost by the opportunities for historical portraiture so amply afforded by an age prolific in brilliant characters. Henry and Anne Boleyn, and Wolsey, and Cromwell, and Cranmer would have vied with each other in eclipsing poor Margaret Roper's modest light. Whether from conscious incapacity for such writing or from sound artistic instinct the author has avoided the peril of effacing her heroine, not without material assistance from the plan adopted of making her her own historian. The threads of the tale are thus wholly in her hands, and by restricting her narration to what personally interests herself she is enabled to keep herself continually in the foreground. Her thoughts are always with her father and her lover: even the latter is so retiring a figure that one almost wonders whether he would have appeared at all but for the compulsion of history. Margaret's reticence about him is, indeed, carried to the verge of improbability: it is scarcely conceivable that a woman in her place would have found so little to say either about William Roper's wooing or the disquiet sub-

sequently aroused by his supposed heretical proclivities. He is finally left to write Sir Thomas More's biography, with the intimation, entirely in keeping with Margaret's way of looking at life, that he is not likely to write it as it ought to be written. "He'll be telling of his doings as Speaker and Chancellor, and his saying this and that in Parliament. Those are the matters that men like to write and to read ; he won't write it after my fashion." Consistently with this disesteem for history, the only striking incident in the book, the taking down of More's head from London Bridge, is entirely unhistorical.

Sir Thomas More's amiable character, the peculiar geniality of his family life at a period when the relations of parents and children were frequently constrained, the circumstance that his biography was written by a member of his own family, and the highly interesting group of scholarly men who gathered around him, render him and his household admirable subjects for a novel of domestic life. The theme might have been treated in other ways : he might have been selected as the representative of resistance to the King's divorce, and the resolute opponent of all innovations in religion ; or, dropping politics and polemics altogether, the novelist might

have depicted More as the apostle of culture; the ally of Pace and Linacre and Colet; the host of Erasmus; contending everywhere against prejudices and notions which for him had become obsolete. We must not complain of the comparative absence of these traits from what is intended to be a purely domestic fiction. The writer has shown appreciation of the importance of the elements of culture in More's life by introducing Erasmus, who is sketched with spirit and sympathy. An anachronism may be excused on the ground that without it Erasmus could not have figured in the book. He did not visit More after the outbreak of the Lutheran revolt against Rome, although they met in France. But at the real epochs of his two visits Margaret was not born; it was, therefore, necessary to violate chronology or dispense with Erasmus: the better alternative we must feel has been chosen. Nor can we take it amiss if it is everywhere implied that Margaret's mother is her natural mother instead of her stepmother, to whom, when the mother's place fell vacant, More is said to have united himself with indecorous haste. It is less excusable to have represented William Roper as inclined at one time to the new opinions in religion. He appears to have steadily adhered to the old faith; to have been rewarded

for his constancy by seats in two of Queen Mary's parliaments—where it is to be hoped that he incurred no responsibility for the atrocities and disasters of that unhappy time, and to have been regarded with suspicion and exposed to molestation in the days of Elizabeth, though retaining the legal office which he had received from his father-in-law.

Such slight inaccuracies are as nothing beside a prevailing misconception which of necessity pervades the entire book. It is an inevitable consequence of entrusting a loving daughter with the biography of her father that he should appear more exalted in great things and more uniformly admirable in small things than, in fact, he was. To order things otherwise would be an offence against truth of nature, much less pardonable than a misrepresentation of matter of fact. More was, in truth, one of the most excellent among private characters, but as a public man he had, though with good intention, erred so deeply that his judicial murder might almost seem fit retribution. He had been a cruel persecutor, and had aggravated the severities of the bad laws, which he might plead he was bound to administer, by intemperate speech and unseemly revilings. In another magistrate of the time this might have passed almost without notice; but More was the

very man who, when in his youth he had sketched his imaginary commonwealth of Utopia, had borne a noble testimony to the right and duty of toleration, and shown himself vastly in advance of the average thought of his age. It is difficult to account for this melancholy lapse; perhaps the most plausible explanation may be that More had become thoroughly alarmed at the wild schemes for social innovation, which in his time frequently accompanied freedom of religious thought. In any case his apostasy goes far to impair the sympathies of those acquainted with it; but it cannot be learned from his adoring daughter, who, moreover, as a Roman Catholic of an intolerant age, would have deemed her father's second thoughts his best. It is equally impossible for her to place herself at the King's point of view. Henry's execution of More was a most tyrannical and iniquitous action, but it was not, as here implied, prompted by mere resentment at More's opposition to his divorce, but by high motives of State policy. Like the contemporary execution of Bishop Fisher, whom the Pope had made a cardinal, it was designed to proclaim and to render the breach with Rome irreparable, and to show that innocence and virtue themselves would not protect the man who should resist the policy to which the King had committed himself.

And, while abhorring Henry's tyrannical wresting of the law, we must acknowledge that no king of England ever conferred such benefits upon his country as he did by practically espousing the cause of the Reformation. The Reformation must have ultimately prevailed in any event; but after what frightful struggles if the influence of the Crown had been thrown against it! England, like France, would have passed through a generation of civil war which would have drained her life-blood, paralysed her progress, and very probably subjected her for a time to the domination of Spain. The glorious age of Elizabeth would have been consumed in civil strife; warrior and statesman would have exhausted their energies in domestic broils; and the great Elizabethan literature would never have come into being. Henry deserves little credit: his motives were purely selfish; yet the fact remains that he made the Shakespeare possible whom More would have made impossible. The reader of "Margaret Roper," therefore, must neither derive his historical information nor imbibe historical prepossessions from it, but regard it as a picture of English home life at the momentous period when mediæval civilisation was going out and modern civilisation was coming in.

R. GARNETT.

CHELSEA, *June* 18*th.*

. . . . . .

On asking Mr. Gunnel to what use I should put this fair *libellus*, he did suggest my making it a kind of family register, wherein to note the more important of our domestic passages, whether of joy or grief—my Father's journeys and absences—the visits of learned men, their notable sayings, etc. "You are ready at the pen, Mistress Margaret," he was pleased to say; "and I would humbly advise your journaling in the same fearless manner in the which you framed that letter which so well pleased the Bishop of Exeter, that he sent you a portugal piece. 'Twill be well to write it in English, which 'tis expedient for you not altogether to neglect, even for the more honourable Latin."

Methinks I am close upon womanhood. . . . "Humbly advise," quotha! to me, that have so oft humbly sued for his pardon and sometimes in vain!

'Tis well to make trial of Gonellus his "humble" advice : albeit, our daily course is so methodical, that 'twill afford scant subject for the pen—*Vitam continet una dies.*

. . . As I traced the last word, methought I heard the well-known tones of Erasmus his pleasant voice ; and, looking forth of my lattice, did indeed behold the dear little man coming up from the river-side with my Father, who, because of the heat, had given his cloak to a tall stripling behind him to bear. I flew upstairs, to advertise Mother, who was half in and half out of her grogram gown, and who stayed me to clasp her ouches ; so that by the time I had followed her down stairs, we found them already in the hall.

So soon as I had kissed their hands, and obtained their blessings, the tall lad stepped forth, and who should he be but William Roper, returned from my Father's errand over-seas ! He hath grown hugely and looks mannish ; but his manners are worsened instead of bettered by foreign travel ; for, instead of his old frankness, he hung upon hand till Father bade him come forward ; and then, as he went his rounds, kissing one after another, stopped short when he came to me, twice made as though he would have

saluted me, and then held back, making me look so stupid, that I could have boxed his ears for his pains, especially as Father burst out a-laughing and cried, "the third time's lucky!" After supper, we took dear Erasmus entirely over the house, in a kind of family procession, e'en from the buttery and scalding-house to our own dear Academia, with its cool green curtain flapping in the evening breeze and blowing aside, as though on purpose to give a glimpse of the clear-shining Thames! Erasmus noted and admired the stone jar, placed by Mercy Giggs on the table, full of blue and yellow irises, scarlet tiger-lilies, dog-roses, honey-suckles, moonwort and herb-trinity; and also our various desks, each in its own little retirement,—mine own, in special, so pleasantly situated! He protested, with every semblance of sincerity, he had never seen so pretty an Academy. I should think not, indeed! Bess, Daisy and I are of opinion, that there is not likely to be such another in the world. He glanced, too, at the books on our desks; Bessy's being Livy; Daisy's, Sallust; and mine, St. Augustine, with Father's marks where I was to read and where desist. He told Erasmus, laying his hand fondly on my head, "Here is one who knows what is implied in the word Trust." Dear Father, well I may! He added, "there was no law against laughing in *his*

Academia, for that his girls knew how to be merry and wise."

From the house to the new building, the chapel and gallery, and thence to visit all the dumb kind, from the great horned owls to Cecy's pet dormice. Erasmus was amused at some of their names, but doubted whether Duns Scotus and the Venerable Bede would have thought themselves complimented in being made name-fathers to a couple of owls ; though he admitted that Argus and Juno were good cognomens for peacocks. Will Roper hath brought Mother a pretty little foreign animal called a marmot, but she said she had no time for such like playthings, and bade him give it to his little wife. Methinks, I being near sixteen and he close upon twenty, we are too old for those childish names now, nor am I much flattered at a present not intended for me ; however, I shall be kind to the little creature, and perhaps, grow fond of it, as 'tis both harmless and diverting.

To return, howbeit, to Erasmus ; Cecy, who had hold of his gown, and had already, through his familiar kindness and her own childish heedlessness, somewhat transgressed bounds, began now in her mirth to fabricate a dialogue, she pretended to have overheard between Argus and Juno as they stood perched on a stone parapet. Erasmus was entertained

with her garrulity for a while, but at length gently checked her, with "Love the truth, little maid, love the truth, or if thou liest, let it be with a circumstance," a qualification which made Mother stare and Father laugh.

Saith Erasmus, "There is no harm in a *fabella*, *apologus* or *parabola*, so long as its character be distinctly recognised for such, but contrariwise, much good; and the same hath been sanctioned, not only by the wiser heads of Greece and Rome, but by our dear Lord Himself. Therefore, Cecily, whom I love exceedingly, be not abashed, child, at my reproof, for thy dialogue between the two peacocks was innocent no less than ingenious, till thou wouldst have insisted that they, in sooth, said something like what thou didst invent. Therein thou didst violence to the truth, which St. Paul hath typified by a girdle, to be worn next the heart and that not only confineth within due limits, but addeth strength. So now be friends; wert thou more than eleven and I no priest, thou shouldst be my little wife, and darn my hose and make me sweet marchpane, such as thou and I love. But, oh! this pretty Chelsea! What daisies! what buttercups! what jovial swarms of gnats! The country all about is as nice and flat as Rotterdam."

Anon, we sit down to rest and talk in the pavilion.

Saith Erasmus to my Father, "I marvel you have never entered into the King's service in some public capacity, wherein your learning and knowledge, both of men and things, would not only serve your own interest, but that of your friends and the public."

Father smiled and made answer, "I am better and happier as I am. As for my friends, I already do for them all I can, so as they can hardly consider me in their debt; and for myself, the yielding to their solicitations that I would put myself forward for the benefit of the world in general, would be like printing a book at request of friends, that the public may be charmed with what, in fact, it values at a doit. The Cardinal offered me a pension, as retaining fee to the King a little while back, but I told him I did not care to be a mathematical point, to have position without magnitude."

Erasmus laughed and said, "I would not have you the slave of any King; howbeit, you might assist him and be useful to him."

"The change of the word," saith Father, "does not alter the matter; I should be a slave, as completely as if I had a collar round my neck."

"But would not increased usefulness," says Erasmus, "make you happier?"

"Happier?" says Father, somewhat heating; "how can that be compassed in a way so abhorrent to my genius? At present, I live as I will, to which very few courtiers can pretend. Half-a-dozen blue-coated serving men answer my turn in the house, garden, field and on the river: I have a few strong horses for work, none for show, plenty of plain food for a healthy family, and enough, with a hearty welcome, for a score of guests that are not dainty. The length of my wife's train infringeth not the statute; and, for myself, I so hate bravery, that my motto is 'Of those whom you see in scarlet, not one is happy.' I have a regular profession, which supports my house, and enables me to promote peace and justice; I have leisure to chat with my wife, and sport with my children; I have hours for devotion and hours for philosophy and the liberal arts, which are absolutely medicinal to me, as antidotes to the sharp but contracted habits of mind engendered by the law. If there be anything in a court life which can compensate for the loss of any of these blessings, dear Desiderius, pray tell me what it is, for I confess I know not."

"You are a comical genius," says Erasmus.

"As for you," retorted Father, "you are at your old trick of arguing on the wrong side, as you did

the first time we met. Nay, don't we know you can declaim backward and forward on the same argument, as you did on the Venetian war?"

Erasmus smiled quietly, and said, "What could I do? The Pope changed his holy mind." Whereat Father smiled too.

"What nonsense you learned men sometimes talk!" pursues Father. "I — wanted at Court, quotha! Fancy a dozen starving men with one roasted pig between them;—do you think they would be really glad to see a thirteenth come up, with an eye to a small piece of the crackling? No; believe me, there is none that courtiers are more sincerely respectful to than the man who avows he hath no intention of attempting to go shares; and e'en him they care mighty little about, for they love none with true tenderness save themselves."

"We shall see you at Court yet," says Erasmus.

Saith Father, "Then I will tell you in what guise. With a fool's cap and bells. Pish! I won't aggravate you, Churchman as you are, by alluding to the blessings I have which you have not; and I trow there is as much danger in taking you for serious when you are only playful and ironical as if you were Plato himself."

Saith Erasmus, after some minutes' silence, "I know

full well that you hold Plato, in many instances, to be sporting when I accept him in very deed and truth. *Speculating* he often was ; as a bright, pure flame must needs be struggling up, and, if it findeth no direct vent, come forth of the oven's mouth. He was like a man shut into a vault, running hither and thither, with his poor, flickering taper, agonising to get forth, and holding himself in readiness to make a spring forward the moment a door should open. But it never did. 'Not many wise are called.' He had climbed a hill in the dark and stood calling to his companions below, 'Come on, come on ! this way lies the East ; I am avised we shall see the sun rise anon.' But they never did. What a Christian he would have made ! Ah ! he is one now. He and Socrates—the veil long removed from their eyes —are sitting at Jesus' feet. *Sancte Socrates, ora pro nobis !*"

Bessie and I exchanged glances at this so strange ejaculation ; but the subject was of such interest, that we listened with deep attention to what followed.

Saith Father, "Whether Socrates were what Plato painted him in his dialogues, is with me a great matter of doubt ; but it is not of moment. When so many contemporaries could distinguish the fanciful from the fictitious, Plato's object could never have

been to deceive. There is something higher in art than gross imitation. He who attempteth it is always the least successful, and his failure hath the odium of a discovered lie, whereas, to give an avowedly fabulous narrative a consistence within itself which permits the reader to be, for the time, voluntarily deceived, is as artful as it is allowable. Were I to construct a tale, I would, as you said to Cecy, lie with a circumstance, but should consider it no compliment to have my unicorns and hippogriffs taken for live animals. *Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, magis tamen amica Veritas.* Now, Plato had a much higher aim than to give a very pattern of Socrates his snub nose. He wanted a peg to hang his thoughts upon——"

"A peg? A statue by Phidias," interrupts Erasmus.

"A statue by Phidias, to clothe in the most beautiful drapery," saith Father; "no matter that the drapery was not his own, he wanted to show it to the best advantage and to the honour rather than prejudice of the statue. And, having clothed the same, he got a spark of Prometheus his fire, and made the aforesaid statue walk and talk, to the glory of gods and men, and sate himself quietly down in a corner. By the way, Desiderius, why shouldst thou not submit thy subtlety to the rules of a colloquy?

Set Eckius and Martin Luther by the ears! Ha! man, what sport! Heavens! if I were to compound a tale or a dialogue, what crotchets and quips of mine own would I not put into my puppets' mouths! and then have out my laugh behind my vizard, as when we used to act burlesques before Cardinal Morton. What rare sport we had, one Christmas, with a mummery we called the trial of feasting! Dinner and Supper were brought up before my Lord Chief Justice charged with murder. Their accomplices were Plum-pudding, Mince-pie, Surfeit, Drunkenness and such like. Being condemned to hang by the neck, I, who was *Supper*, stuffed out with I cannot tell you how many pillows, began to call lustily for a confessor, and, on his stepping forth, commenced a list of all the fits, convulsions, spasms, pains in the head and so forth, I had inflicted on this one and the other: 'Alas! good Father,' says I, 'King John laid his death at my door;—indeed, there's scarce a royal or noble house that hath not a charge against me and I am sorely afraid (giving a poke at a fat priest that sat at my Lord Cardinal's elbow) I shall have the death of that holy man to answer for.'"

Erasmus laughed and said, "Did I ever tell you of the retort of Willibald Pirkheimer? A monk, hearing him praise me somewhat lavishly to another,

could not avoid expressing by his looks great disgust and dissatisfaction ; and, on being asked whence they arose, confessed he could not, with patience, hear the commendation of a man so notoriously fond of eating fowls. 'Does he steal them?' says Pirkheimer. 'Surely no,' says the monk. 'Why, then,' quoth Willibald, 'I know of a fox who is ten times the greater rogue ; for, look you, he helps himself to many a fat hen from my roost without ever offering to pay me. But tell me now, dear Father, is it then a sin to eat fowls?' 'Most assuredly it is,' says the monk, 'if you indulge in them to gluttony.' 'Ah! if, if!' quoth Pirkheimer. 'If stands stiff,' as the Lacedaemonians told Philip of Macedon ; and 'tis not by eating bread alone, my dear Father, you have acquired that huge paunch of yours. I fancy, if all the fat fowls that have gone into it could raise their voices and cackle at once, they would make noise enough to drown the drums and trumpets of an army.' Well may Luther say," continued Erasmus, laughing, "that their fasting is easier to them than our eating to us ; seeing that every man jack of them hath to his evening meal two quarts of beer, a quart of wine, and as many as he can eat of spice cakes, the better to relish his drink. While I . . . 'tis true my stomach is Lutheran, but my heart is Catholic ; that's as Heaven made me,

and I'll be judged by you all, whether I am not as thin as a weasel."

'Twas now growing dusk, and Cecy's tame hares were just beginning to be on the alert, skipping across our path, as we returned towards the house, jumping over one another, and raising themselves on their hind legs to solicit our notice. Erasmus was amused at their gambols and at our making them beg for vine-tendrils; and Father told him there was hardly a member of the household who had not a dumb pet of some sort. "I encourage the taste in them," he said, "not only because it fosters humanity and affords harmless recreation, but because it promotes habits of forethought and regularity. No child or servant of mine hath liberty to adopt a pet which he is too lazy or nice to attend to himself. A little management may enable even a young gentlewoman to do this, without soiling her hands and to neglect giving them proper food at proper times entails a disgrace of which every one of them would be ashamed. But, hark! there is the Vesper-bell."

As we passed under a pear-tree, Erasmus told us, with much drollery, of a piece of boyish mischief of his,—the theft of some pears off a particular tree, the fruit of which the Superior of his convent had meant to reserve to himself. One morning, Erasmus had

climbed the tree and was feasting to his great content when he was aware of the Superior approaching to catch him in the fact ; so, quickly slid down to the ground and made off in the opposite direction, limping as he went. The malice of this act consisted in its being the counterfeit of the gait of a poor lame lay brother, who was in fact smartly punished for Erasmus' misdeed. Our friend mentioned this with a kind of remorse and observed to my Father "Men laugh at the sins of young people and little children, as if they were little sins ; albeit, the robbery of an apple or cherry-orchard is as much a breaking of the eighth commandment as the stealing of a leg of mutton from a butcher's stall, and ofttimes with far less excuse. Our Church tells us, indeed, of venial sins such as the theft of an apple or a pin ; but I think," (looking hard at Cecily and Jack,) "even the youngest amongst us could tell how much sin and sorrow was brought into the world by stealing an apple."

At bedtime, Bess and I did agree in wishing that all learned men were as apt to unite pleasure with profit in their talk as Erasmus. There be some that can write after the fashion of Paul and others preach like unto Apollos ; but this, methinketh, is scattering seed by the wayside, like the great Sower.

'Tis singular, the love that Jack and Cecy have for one another ; it resembleth that of twins. Jack is not forward at his book ; on the other hand, he hath a resolution of character which Cecy altogether wants. Last night, when Erasmus spoke of children's sins, I observed her squeeze Jack's hand with all her might. I know what she was thinking of. Having both been forbidden to approach a favourite part of the river bank which had given way from too much use, one or the other of them transgressed, as was proven by the small footprints in the mud as well as by a nosegay of flowers that grow not, save by the river ; to wit, purple loosestrife, cream-and-codlins, scorpion-grass, water-plantain and the like. Neither of them would confess and Jack was therefore sentenced to be whipped. As he walked off with Mr. Drew, I observed Cecy turn so pale that I whispered Father I was certain she was guilty. He made answer, "Never mind, we cannot beat a girl and 'twill answer the same purpose ; in flogging him, we flog both."

Jack bore the first stripe or two, I suppose, well enough, but at length we heard him cry out, on which Cecy could not forbear to do the same and then stopped both her ears. I expected every moment to hear her say "Father, 'twas I ;" but no, she had

not courage for that ; only, when Jack came forth all smirched with tears, she put her arm about his neck and they walked off together into the nuttery. Since that hour, she hath been more devoted to him than ever, if possible ; and he, boy-like, finds satisfaction in making her his little slave. But the beauty lay in my Father's improvement of the circumstance. Taking Cecy on his knee that evening (for she was not ostensibly in disgrace) he began to talk of atonement and mediation for sin and Who it was that bore our sins for us on the tree. 'Tis thus he turns the daily accidents of our quiet lives into lessons of deep import, not pedantically delivered, *ex cathedrâ*, but welling forth from a full and fresh mind.

This morn I had risen before dawn, being minded to meditate on sundry matters before Bess was up and doing, she being given to much talk during her dressing and made my way to the pavilion, where, methought, I should be quiet enough ; but behold ! Father and Erasmus were there before me, in fluent and earnest discourse. I would have withdrawn but Father without interrupting his sentence, puts his arm round me and draweth me to him ; so there I sit, my head on his shoulder and mine eyes on Erasmus' face.

From much they spake and othermuch I guessed,

they had been conversing on the present state of the Church and how much it needed renovation.

Erasmus said the vices of the clergy and ignorance of the vulgar had now come to a point, at the which, a remedy must be found or the whole fabric would fall to pieces.

— Said, the revival of learning seemed appointed by Heaven for some great purpose, 'twas difficult to say how great.

— Spake of the new art of printing and its possible consequents.

— Of the active and fertile minds at present turning up new ground and ferreting out old abuses.

— Of the abuse of monachism and of the evil lives of conventuals. In special, of the fanaticism and hypocrisy of the Dominicans.

— Considered the evils of the times such, as that society must shortly, by a vigorous effort, shake them off.

— Wondered at the patience of the laity for so many generations but thought them now waking from their sleep. The people had of late begun to know their physical power and to chafe at the weight of their yoke.

— Thought the doctrine of indulgences altogether bad and false.

Father said that the gradually increased severity of Church discipline concerning minor offences had become such as to render indulgences the needful remedy for burthens too heavy to be borne.

— Condemned a draconic code, that visited even sins of discipline with the extreme penalty. Quoted how ill such excessive severity answered in our own land with regard to the civil law ; twenty thieves oft hanging together on the same gibbet yet robbery no whit abated.

Othermuch to same purport, the which, if all set down, would too soon fill my *libellus*. At length, unwillingly broke off, when the bell rang us to Matins.

At Breakfast, William and Rupert were earnest with my Father to let them row him to Westminster, which he was disinclined to, as he was for more speed and had promised Erasmus an early caste to Lambeth ; howbeit, he consented that they should pull us up to Putney in the evening and William should have the stroke-oar. Erasmus said he must thank the Archbishop for his present of a horse ; "though I'm full fain" he observed, "to believe it a changeling ; he is idle and gluttonish, as thin as a wasp and as ugly as sin. Such a horse and such a rider !"

In the evening Will and Rupert had made them-

selves spruce enough, with nosegays and ribbons, and we took water bravely ;—John Harris in the stern, playing the Recorder. We had the six-oared barge and when Rupert Allington was tired of pulling, Mr. Clement took his oar ; and when he wearied, John Harris gave over playing the pipe but William and Mr. Gunnel never flagged.

Erasmus was full of his visit to the Archbishop, who, as usual, I think, had given him some money.

"We sat down two hundred to table" saith he, "there was fish, flesh and fowl ; but Wareham only played with his knife and drank no wine. He was very cheerful and accessible, he knows not what pride is and yet, of how much might he be proud ! What genius ! what erudition ! what kindness and modesty ! From Wareham, who ever departed in sorrow ?"

Landing at Fulham, we had a brave ramble through the meadows. Erasmus, noting the poor children gathering the dandelion and milk-thistle for the herb-market, was advised to speak of foreign herbs and their uses, both for food and medicine.

"For me," says Father, "there is many a plant I entertain in my garden and paddock which the fastidious would cast forth. I like to teach my children the uses of common things—to know, for instance, the uses of the flowers and weeds that grow

in our fields and hedges. Many a poor knave's pottage would be improved, if he were skilled in the properties of the burdock and purple orchis, lady's-smock, brooklime, and old man's pepper. The roots of wild succory and water arrow-head might agreeably change his lenten diet, and glasswort afford him a pickle for his mouthful of salt-meat. Then, there are cresses and woodsorrel to his breakfast and salep for his hot evening mess. For his medicine, there is herb-twopence, that will cure a hundred ills; camomile, to lull a raging tooth and the juice of buttercup to clear his head by sneezing. Vervain cureth ague and crowfoot affords the least painful of blisters. St. Anthony's turnip is an emetic, goosegrass sweetens the blood, woodruff is good for the liver and bindweed hath nigh as much virtue as the foreign scammony. Pimpernel promoteth laughter and poppy, sleep; thyme giveth pleasant dreams and an ashen branch drives evil spirits from the pillow. As for rosemary, I let it run over my garden walls, not only because my bees love it, but because 'tis the herb sacred to remembrance, and, therefore, to friendship, whence a sprig of it hath a dumb language that maketh it the chosen emblem at our funeral wakes and in our burial grounds. Howbeit, I am a schoolboy, prating in presence of his master, for here is John Clement at

my elbow, who is the best botanist and herbalist of us all."

Returning home, the youths being warmed with rowing and in high spirits, did entertain themselves and us with many jests and playings upon words, some of them forced enough, yet provocative of laughing. Afterwards, Mr. Gunnel proposed enigmas and curious questions. Among others, he would know which of the famous women of Greece and Rome we maidens would resemble. Bess was for Cornelia, Daisy for Clelia, but I for Damo, daughter of Pythagoras, which William Roper deemed stupid enough and thought I might have found as good a daughter that had not died a maid.

Saith Erasmus, with his sweet, inexpressible smile, "Now I will tell you, lads and lasses, what manner of man I would be, if I were not Erasmus. I would step back some few years of my life and be half-way 'twixt thirty and forty ; I would be pious and profound enough for the Church, albeit no Churchman ; I would have a blithe, stirring, English wife and half-a-dozen merry girls and boys, an English homestead, neither hall nor farm but between both ; near enough to the city for convenience but away from its noise. I would have a profession that gave me some hours daily of regular business, that should let men know

my parts and court me into public station, for which my taste made me rather withdraw. I would have such a private independence as should enable me to give and lend rather than beg and borrow. I would encourage mirth without buffoonery, ease without negligence ; my habit and table should be simple and for my looks I would be neither tall nor short, fat nor lean, rubicund nor fallow but of a fair skin with blue eyes, brownish beard and a countenance engaging and attractive so that all of my company could not choose but love me."

"Why, then, you would be Father himself," cries Cecy, clasping his arm in both her hands with a kind of rapture ; and, indeed, the portraiture was so like that we could not but smile at the resemblance.

Arrived at the landing, Father protested he was weary with his ramble ; and, his foot slipping, he wrenched his ankle and sat for an instant on a barrow, which one of the men had left with his garden-tools and before he could rise or cry out, William, laughing, rolled him up to the house-door ; which, considering Father's weight, was much for a stripling to do. Father said the same, and, laying his hand on Will's shoulder with kindness, cried : "Bless thee, my boy, but I would not have thee overstrained like Biton and Cleobis."

This morn, hinting to Bess that she was lacing herself too straitly, she briskly replied: "One would think 'twere as great merit to have a thick waist as to be one of the early Christians!"

These humorous retorts are ever at her tongue's end and albeit, as Jacky one day angrily remarked when she had been teasing him, "Bess, thy wit is stupidness;" yet, for one who talks so much at random, no one can be more keen when she chooseth. Father said of her, half fondly, half apologetically, to Erasmus, "Her wit hath a fine subtlety that eludes you almost before you have time to recognize it for what it really is." To which Erasmus readily assented, adding, that it had the rare merits of playing less on persons than things, and never on bodily defects.

Hum!—I wonder if they ever said as much in favour of me. I know, indeed, Erasmus calls me a forward girl. Alas! that may be taken in two senses.

Grievous work, overnight, with the churning. Nought would persuade Gillian but that the cream was bewitched by Gammer Gurney, who was dissatisfied last Friday with her dole and hobbled away mumping and cursing. At all events, the butter

would not come ; but Mother was resolute not to have so much good cream wasted ; so sent for Bess and me, Daisy and Mercy Giggs and insisted on our churning in turn till the butter came, if we sat up all night for it. 'Twas a hard saying and might have hampered her like as Jephtha his rash vow : howbeit, so soon as she had left us, we turned it into a frolic, and sang *Chevy Chase*, from end to end, to beguile time ; nevertheless the butter would not come ; so then we grew sober, and, at the instance of sweet Mercy, chaunted the 119th Psalm ; and by the time we had attained to "*lucerna pedibus*" I heard the buttermilk separating and splashing in right earnest. 'Twas near midnight, however and Daisy had fallen asleep on the dresser.

Gillian will never be convinced but that our Latin broke the spell.

21*st.*

Erasmus went to Richmond this morning with Polus, (for so he latinizes Reginald Pole, after his usual fashion) and some other of his friends. On his return, he made us laugh at the following. They had climbed the hill and were admiring the prospect, when Pole, casting his eyes aloft and beginning to make sundry gesticulations, exclaimed "What is it

I behold ? May Heaven avert the omen !" with such-like exclamations, which raised the curiosity of all. "Don't you behold," cries he, "that enormous dragon flying through the sky ? his horns of fire ? his curly tail ?"

"No," says Erasmus, "nothing like it. The sky is as clear as unwritten paper."

Howbeit, he continued to affirm and to stare, until at length, one after another, by dint of straining their eyes and their imaginations, did admit, first, that they saw something ; next, that it might be a dragon ; and last, that it was. Of course, on their passage homeward they could talk of little else—some made serious reflections ; others, philosophical speculations ; and Pole waggishly triumphed in having been the first to discern the spectacle.

"And you truly believe that there was a sign in the heavens ?" we inquired of Erasmus.

"What know I ?" returned he smiling ; "you know, Constantine saw a cross, why should Polus not see a dragon ? We must judge by the event. Perhaps its mission may be to fly away with him. He swore to the curly tail."

How difficult it is to discern the supernatural from the incredible ! We laughed at Gillian's faith in our Latin ; Erasmus laughs at Polus' dragon. Have we

a right to believe nought but what we can see or prove? Nay, that will never do. Father says a capacity for reasoning increaseth a capacity for believing. He believes there is such a thing as witchcraft, though not that poor old Gammer Gurney is a witch; he believes that saints can work miracles, though not in all the marvels reported of the Canterbury shrine.

Had I been justice of the peace, like the king's grandmother, I would have been very jealous of accusations of witchcraft, and have taken infinite pains to sift out the causes of malice, jealousy &c which might have wrought with the poor old women's enemies.

Holy Writ saith "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live;" but questionless, many have suffered hurt that were no witches and for my part, I have always held ducking to be a very uncertain as well as a very cruel taste.

I cannot help smiling, whenever I think of my rencounter with William this morning. Mr. Gunnell had set me Homer's tiresome list of ships and because of the excessive heat within doors, I took my book into the nuttery, to be beyond the wrath of far-darting Phoebus Apollo, where I climbed into my favourite filbert seat. Anon comes William through

the trees without seeing me; and seats him at the foot of my filbert; then, out with his tablets and, in a posture I should have called studied, had he known any one within sight, falls poetizing, I question not. Having no mind to be interrupted, I let him be, thinking he would soon exhaust the vein; but a caterpillar dropping from the leaves on to my page, I was fain, for mirth sake, to shake it down on his tablets. As ill luck would have it however, the little reptile only fell among his curls; which so took me at vantage that I could not help hastily crying, "I beg your pardon." 'Twas worth a world to see his start! "Why!" cries he, looking up, "are there indeed *hamadryads*?" and would have gallanted a little, but I bade him hold down his head, while that with a twig I switched off the caterpillar. Neither could forbear laughing and then he sued me to step down, but I was minded to abide where I was. Howbeit, after a minute's pause, he said, in a grave, kind tone "Come, little wife;" and taking mine arm steadily in his hand, I lost my balance and was fain to come down whether or no. We walked for some time *juxta fluvium* and he talked not badly of his travels, in so much as I found there was really more in him than one would think.—Was there ever anything so perverse, unlucky, and downright disagreeable?

We hurried our afternoon tasks, to go on the water with my Father ; and meaning to give Mr. Gunnel my Latin traduction, which is in a book like unto this, I never knew he had my journal instead, until that he burst out a laughing. "So this is the famous *libellus*" quoth he . . . I never waited for another word, but snatched it out of his hand ; which he, for so strict a man, bore well enough. I do not believe he could have read a dozen lines and they were towards the beginning ; but I should hugely like to know which dozen lines they were.

Hum ! I have a mind never to write another word. That will be punishing myself, though, instead of Gunnel. And he bade me not take it to heart like the late Bishop of Durham, to whom a like accident befell, which so annoyed him, that he died of chagrin. I will never again, howbeit write anything savouring ever so little of levity or absurdity. The saints keep me to it ! And, to know it from my exercise book, I will henceforth bind a blue ribbon round it. Furthermore, I will knit the said ribbon in so close a knot, that it shall be worth no one else's pains to pick it out. Lastly, and for entire security, I will carry the same in my pouch, which will hold bigger matters than this.

This day, at dinner, Mr. Clement took the pistoller's place at the reading-desk ; and, instead of continuing the subject in hand, read a paraphrase of the 103rd Psalm ; the faithfulness and elegant turn of which, Erasmus highly commended, though he took exceptions to the phrase "renewing thy youth like that of the phoenix," whose fabulous story he believed to have been unknown to the Psalmist, and therefore, however poetical, unfit to be introduced. A deep blush on sweet Mercy's face led to the detection of the paraphrase and drew on her some deserved commendations. Erasmus, turning to my Father, exclaimed with animation, "I would call this house the Academy of Plato, were it not injustice to compare it to a place where the usual disputations concerning figures and numbers were occasionally interspersed with disquisitions concerning the moral virtues." Then, in a graver mood, he added "One might envy you, but that your precious privileges are bound up with so painful anxieties. How many pledges have you given to Fortune!"

"If my children are to die out of the course of nature, before their parents," Father firmly replied, "I would rather they died well-instructed than ignorant."

"You remind me," rejoins Erasmus, "of Phocion, whose wife, when he was about to drink the fatal cup, exclaimed, 'Ah, my husband.' 'And would you, my wife,' he returned, 'have me die guilty?'"

Awhile after, Gonellus asked leave to see Erasmus' signet-ring, which he handed down to him. In passing it back, William, who was occupied in carving a crane, handed it so negligently that it fell to the ground. I never saw such a face as Erasmus made, when 'twas picked out from the rushes. And yet, ours are renewed almost daily, which many think over nice. He took it gingerly in his fair, woman-like hands, and washed and wiped it before he put it on; which escaped not my step-mother's displeased notice. Indeed, these Dutchmen are scrupulously clean, though Mother calls them swinish, because they will eat raw salad, though for that matter, Father loves cresses and ramps. She also mislikes Erasmus for eating cheese and butter together with his manchet, or what he calls *boetram*; and for being generally dainty at his sizes, which he saith is an ill example to so many young people, and becometh not one with so little money in his purse: howbeit, I think 'tis not nicety, but a weak stomach, which makes him loathe our salt-meat commons from Michaelmas to

Easter, and eschew fish of the coarser sort. He cannot breakfast on cold milk like Father, but liketh furmity a little spiced. At dinner, he pecks at, rather than eats, ruffs and reeves, lapwings or any small birds it may chance; but affects sweets and subtleties, and loves a cup of wine or ale, stirred with rosemary. Father never toucheth the wine-cup but to grace a guest and loves water from the spring. We growing girls eat more than either and Father says he loves to see us slice away at the cob-loaf; it does him good. What a kind father he is! I wish my step-mother were as kind. I hate all sneaping and snubbing, flouting, fleering, pinching, nipping and such like; it only creates resentment instead of penitence, and lowers the mind of either party. Gillian throws a rolling-pin at the turnspit's head and we call it low life, but we look for such unmannerliness in the kitchen. A whip is only fit for Tisiphone.

As we rose from table, I noted Argus perched on the window-sill, eagerly watching for his dinner, which he looketh for as punctually as if he could tell the dial, and to please the good, patient bird, till the scullion brought him his mess of garden-stuff, I fetched him some pulse, which he took from mine hand, taking good heed not to hurt me

with his sharp beak. While I was feeding him, Erasmus came up, and asked me concerning Mercy Giggs, and I told him how that she was a friendless orphan, to whom dear Father afforded protection and the run of the house; and told him of her gratitude, her meekness, her patience, her docility, her aptitude for all good works and almsdeeds: and how, in her little chamber, she improved each spare moment in the way of study and prayer. He repeated "friendless? she cannot be called friendless, who hath More for her protector and his children for companions;" and then would hear more of her parents' sad story. Also, would hear somewhat of Rupert Allington and how Father gained his lawsuit. Also, of Daisy, whose name he took to be the true abreviation for Margaret, but I told him how that my step-sister, and Mercy and I, being all three of a name, and I being always called Meg, we had in short given one the significative of her characteristic virtue, and the other that of the French *Marguerite*, which may indeed be rendered pearl or daisy. And Chaucer, speaking of our English daisy, saith: "*si douce est la marguerite.*"

23rd.

Since the little wisdom I have capacity to acquire, so oft gives me the headache to distraction, I marvel not at Jupiter's pain in his head, when the goddess of Wisdom sprang therefrom full grown.

This morn, to quiet the pain brought on by busy application, Mr. Gunnel would have me close my book and ramble forth with Cecy into the fields. We strolled towards Walham Green ; and she was seeking for shepherd's purses and shepherd's needles, when she came running back to me, looking rather pale. I asked what had scared her, and she made answer that Gammer Gurney was coming along the hedge. I bade her set aside her fears, and anon we came up with Gammer, who was pulling at the purple blossoms of the deadly nightshade. I said, "Gammer, to what purpose gather that weed ? knowest not 'tis evil ?"

She saith, mumbling, "What God hath created, that call not thou evil."

"Well, but," quoth I, "'tis poison."

"Aye, and medicine too," returns Gammer. "I wonder what we poor souls might come to, if we took nought for our ails and aches but what we could buy of the apothecary. We've got no Dr. Clement, we poor folks, to be our leech of the household."

"But hast no fear," quoth I, "of an overdose?"

"There's many a doctor," saith she, with an unpleasant leer, "that hath given that at first. In time he gets his hand in; and I have had plenty of practice —thanks to self and sister."

"I knew not," quoth I, "that thou hadst a sister."

"How should ye, Mistress," returns she shortly, "when ye never comes nigh us? We've grubbed on together this many a year."

"'Tis so far," I returned, half ashamed.

"Why, so it be," answers Gammer; "far from neighbours, far from Church and far from Priest; howbeit, my old legs carry me to your house on Fridays; but I know not whether I shall ever come again—the rye bread was so hard last time; it may serve for young teeth and for them as has got none; but mine, you see are only on the go," and she opened her mouth with a ghastly smile. "'Tis not," she added, "that I'm ungrateful; but thou sees, Mistress, I really *can't* eat crusts."

After a moment, I asked, "Where lies your dwelling?"

"Out by yonder," quoth she, pointing to a shapeless mass like a huge bird's nest in the corner of the field. "There bides poor Joan and I. Wilt come

and look within, Mistress, and see how a Christian can die?"

I mutely complied, in spite of Cecy's pulling at my skirts. Arrived at the wretched abode, which had a hole for its chimney and another for door at once and window, I found, sitting in a corner, propped on a heap of rushes, dried leaves and old rags, an aged sick woman, who seemed to have but a little while to live. A mug of water stood within her reach; I saw none other sustenance; but, in her visage, oh, such peace! . . . Whispers Gammer with an awful look,

"She sees 'em now!"

"Sees who?" quoth I.

"Why, angels in two long rows, afore the throne of God, a bending of themselves, this way, with their faces to the earth and arms stretched out afore them."

"Hath she seen a priest?" quoth I.

"Lord love ye," returns Gammer, "what could a priest do for her? She's in heaven already. I doubt if she can hear me." And then, in a loud, distinct voice, quite free from her usual mumping, she began to recite in English, "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, and walketh in His ways," etc; which the dying woman heard, although already speechless and reaching out her feeble arm unto her sister's neck, she dragged it down till their faces touched; and

then, looking up, pointed at somewhat she aimed to make her see . . . and we all looked up, but saw nought. Howbeit, she pointed up three several times, and lay, as it were, transfigured before us, a gazing at some transporting sight and ever and anon turning on her sister looks of love ; and, the while we stood thus agaze, her spirit passed away without even a thrill or a shudder. Cecy and I began to weep ; and after a while, so did Gammer ; then, putting us forth, she said, " Go, children, go ; 'tis no good crying ; and yet I'm thankful to ye for your tears."

I said " Is there aught we can do for thee ? "

She made answer, " Perhaps you can give me twopence, mistress, to lay on her poor eyelids and keep 'em down. Bless 'ee, bless 'ee ! You're like the good Samaritan — he pulled out twopence. And maybe, if I come to 'ee to-morrow, you'll give me a lapfull of rosemary, to lay on her poor corpse . . . I know you've plenty. God be with 'ee, children ; and be sure ye mind how a Christian can die."

So we left and came home sober enough. Cecy saith, " To die is not so fearful, Meg, as I thought, but should *you* fancy dying without a priest ? I should not ; and yet Gammer said she wanted not one. Howbeit, for certain, Gammer Gurney is no witch, or she would not so praise God."

To conclude, Father, on hearing all, hath given Gammer more than enough for her present needs, and Cecy and I are the almoners of his mercy.

June 24th.

Yesternight, being St. John's Eve, we went into town to see the mustering of the watch. Mr. Rastali had secured us a window opposite the King's Head, in Cheap, where their Majesties went in state to see the show. The streets were a marvel to see, being like unto a continuation of fair bowers or arbours, garlanded across and over the doors with green birch, long fennel, orpin, St. John's wort, white lilies, and such like ; with innumerable candles interspersed, the which, being lit up as soon as 'twas dusk, made the whole look like enchanted land ; while, at the same time, the leaping over bon-fires commenced and produced shouts of laughter. The youths would have had Father go down and join them ; Rupert, specially, begged him hard, but he put him off with, "Sirrah, you goose-cap, dost think 'twould befit the Judge of the Sheriff's Court ?"

At length, to the sound of trumpets, came marching up Cheapside two thousand of the watch, in white fustian, with the city badge ; and seven hundred

cresset bearers, each with his fellow to supply him with oil, and making, with their flaring lights, the night as clear as day. After them, the morris-dancers and city waits; the Lord Mayor on horseback, very fine, with his giants and pageants; and the Sheriff and his watch and his giants and pageants. The streets very uproarious on our way back to the barge but the homeward passage delicious; the night air cool and the stars shining brightly. Father and Erasmus had some astronomic talk; howbeit, I thought Erasmus less familiar with the heavenly bodies than Father is. Afterwards they spoke of the King, but not over-freely, by reason of the barge-men overhearing. Thence, to the ever vexed question of Martin Luther, of whom Erasmus spake in terms of earnest, yet qualified praise.

"If Luther be innocent," quoth he, "I would not run him down by a wicked faction; if he be in error, I would rather have him reclaimed than destroyed; for this is most agreeable to the doctrine of our dear Lord and Master, who would not bruise the broken reed nor quench the smoking flax." And much more to the same purpose.

We younger folks fell to choosing our favourite mottoes and devices, in which the elders at length joined us. Mother's was loyal — "Cleave to the

crown, though it hang on a bush." Erasmus's pithy —"*Festina lente*." William said he was indebted for his to St. Paul. "I seek not yours, but you." For me I quoted one I had seen in an old country church, "*Mieux être que paraître*," which pleased Father and Erasmus much.

June 25th.

Poor Erasmus caught cold on the water last night, and keeps house to-day, taking warm possets. 'Tis my week of housekeeping under Mother's guidance, and I never had more pleasure in it; delighting to suit his taste in sweet things, which, methinks, all men like. I have enough of time left for study, when all's done.

He hath been the best part of the morning in our Academia, looking over books and manuscripts, taking notes of some, discoursing with Mr. Gunnel on others; and in some sort, interrupting our morning's work; but how pleasantly! Besides, as Father saith, "Variety is not always interruption. That which occasionally lets and hinders our accustomed studies, may prove to the ingenious no less profitable than the studies themselves."

They began with discussing the pronunciation of

Latin and Greek, on which Erasmus differeth much from us, though he holds to our pronunciation of the Theta. Thence, to the absurd party of the Ciceronians now in Italy, who will admit of no author save Tully to be read nor quoted, nor any word not in his writings to be used. Thence to the latinity of the Fathers, of whose style he spoke lightly enough, but rated Jerome above Augustine. At length, to his Greek and Latin Testament, of late issued from the press, and the incredible labour it hath cost him to make it as perfect as possible : on this subject he so warmed that Bess and I listened with suspended breath. "May it please God," saith he, knitting fervently his hands, "to make it a blessing to all Christendom ! I look for no other reward. Scholars and believers yet unborn may have reason to thank, and yet may forget Erasmus." He then went on to explain to Gunnel what he had much felt in want of and hoped some scholar might yet undertake ; to wit, a sort of *Index Bibliorum*, showing in how many passages of Holy Writ occurreth any given word, etc ; and he even proposed it to Gunnel, saying 'twas only the work of patience and industry and might be laid aside and resumed as occasion offered and completed at leisure, to the great thankfulness of scholars. But Gunnel only smiled and shook his head. Howbeit, Erasmus set forth his

scheme so plainly, that I, having a pen in hand, did privily note down all the heads of the same, thinking, if none else would undertake it, why should not I? since leisure and industry were alone required and since 'twould be so acceptable to many, specially to Erasmus.

June 29th.

Heard Mother say to Barbara, "Be sure the sirloin is well basted for the King's physician;" which avised me that Dr. Linacre was expected. In truth, he returned with Father in the barge; and they took a turn on the river bank before sitting down to table. I noted them from my lattice; and anon, Father, beckoning me, cries, "Child, bring out my favourite treatise on fishing, printed by Wynkyn de Worde; I must give the Doctor my loved passage."

Joining them with the book, I found Father telling him of the roach, dace, chub, barbel etc., we oft catch opposite the Church; and hastily turning over the leaves, he beginneth with unction to read the passage ensuing, which I love to the full as much as he:—

He observeth, if the angler's sport should fail him, "he at the best hath his wholesome walk and merry at his ease, a sweet air of the sweet savour of the

mead of flowers, that maketh him hungry ; he heareth the melodious harmony of fowls, he seeth the young swans, herons, ducks, coots, and many other fowls, with their broods, which meseemeth better than all the noise of hounds, falconers, and fowlers can make. And if the angler take fish, then there is no man merrier than he in his spirit." And "Ye shall not use this foresaid crafty disport for no covetousness in the increasing and sparing of your money only, but principally for your solace and to cause the health of your body and specially of your soul, for when ye purpose to go on your disports of fishing, ye will not desire many persons with you, which would let you of your game. And then ye may serve God devoutly, in saying affectuously your customable prayer ; and thus doing, ye shall eschew and avoid many vices."

"Angling is itself a vice" cries Erasmus from the threshold ; "for my part I will fish none, save and except for pickled oysters."

"In the regions below," answers Father ; and then laughingly tells Linacre of his first dialogue with Erasmus, who had been feasting in my Lord Mayor's cellar :—"'Whence come you?' 'From below.' 'What were they about there?' 'Eating live oysters and drinking out of leather jacks.' 'Either you are Erasmus,' etc. 'Either you are More or nothing.'"

"'Neither more nor less,' you should have rejoined," saith the Doctor.

"How I wish I had!" says Father; "don't torment me with a jest I might have made and did not make; specially to put down Erasmus."

"*Concedo nulli*" saith Erasmus.

"Why are you so lazy?" asks Linacre. "I am sure you can speak English if you will."

"So far from it," saith Erasmus, "that I made my incapacity an excuse for declining an English rectory. Albeit, you know how Wareham requited me; saying, in his kind, generous way, I served the Church more by my pen than I could by preaching sermons in a country village."

Saith Linacre "The Archbishop hath made another remark, as much to the purpose; to wit, that he has received from you the immortality which emperors and kings cannot bestow."

"They cannot even bid a smoking sirloin retain its heat an hour after it hath left the fire," saith Father. "Tilly-vally! as my good Alice says,—let us remember the universal doom, '*fruges consumere nati*,' and philosophize over our ale and bracket."

"Not *Cambridge* ale, neither" saith Erasmus.

"Will you never forget that unlucky beverage?" saith Father. "Why, man, think how many poor

scholars there be, that content themselves, as I have heard one of St. John's declare, with a penny piece of beef amongst four, stewed into pottage with a little salt and oatmeal; and that after fasting from four o'clock in the morning. Say grace for us this day, Erasmus, with good heart."

At table, discourse flowed so thick and fast that I might aim in vain to chronicle it—and why should I? dwelling as I do at the fountain head? Only that I find pleasure, already, in glancing over the foregoing pages whensoever they concern Father and Erasmus and wish they were more faithfully recalled and better written. One thing sticks by me,—a funny reply of Father's to a man who owed him money and who put him off with "*Memento morieris.*" "I bid you," retorted Father, "*Memento Mori aeris*, and I wish you would take as good care to provide for the one as I do for the other."

Linacre laughed much at this, and said—"That was real wit; a spark struck at the moment and with no ill-nature in it, for I am sure your debtor could not help laughing."

"Not he," quoth Erasmus. "More's drollery is like that of a young gentlewoman of his name, which shines without burning" . . . and, oddly enough, he looked across at *me*. I am sure he meant Bess.

July 1st.

Father brought home a strange guest to-day,—a converted *Jew*, with grizzly beard, furred gown and eyes that shone like lamps lit in dark caverns. He had been to Benmarine and Tremezen, to the holy city and to Damascus, to Urmia and Auyria, and I think all over the known world, and told us many strange tales, one hardly knew how to believe : as for example, of a sea-coast tribe, called the Balooches, who live on fish and build their dwellings of the bones. Also, of a race of his countrymen beyond Euphrates who believe in Christ, but know nothing of the Pope ; and of whom were the Magi that followed the star. This agreeth not with our legend. He averred that, though so far apart from their brethren, their speech was the same and even their songs ; and he sang or chaunted one which he said was common among the Jews all over the world and had been so ever since their city was ruined and the people captivated, and yet it was never set down in prick-song. Erasmus, who knows little or nought of Hebrew, listened to the words with curiosity and made him repeat them twice or thrice : and though I know not the character, it seemed to me they sounded thus :—

Adir Hu yivne bethcha beccaro,
El, b'ne ; El, b'ne ; El, b'ne ;
Bethcha beccaro.

Though Christianish, he would not eat pig's face ; and said swine's flesh was forbidden by the Hebrew law for its unwholesomeness in hot countries and hot weather, rather than by way of arbitrary prohibition. Daisy took a great dislike to this man, and would not sit next him.

In the hay-field all the evening. Swathed Father in a hayrope and made him pay the fine, which he pretended to resist. Cecy was just about to cast one round Erasmus, when her heart failed and she ran away, colouring to the eyes. He said, he never saw such pretty shame. Father reclining on the hay, with his head on my lap and his eyes shut, Bess asked if he were asleep. He made answer, "Yes, and dreaming." I asked, "Of what ?" "Of a far-off future day, Meg ; when thou and I shall look back on this hour, and this hay-field and my head on thy lap."

"Nay, but what a stupid dream, Mr. More," says Mother. "Why, what would *you* dream of, Mrs. Alice ?" "Forsooth, if I dreamt at all, when I was wide awake, it should be of being Lord Chancellor at the least." "Well, wife, I forgive thee for not

saying at the *most*. Lord Chancellor, quotha! And you would be Dame Alice, I trow, and ride in a whirlecote, and keep a Spanish jennet, and a couple of greyhounds, and wear a train before and behind, and carry a jerfalcon on your fist." "On my wrist." "No, that's not such a pretty word as t'other! Go to, go!"

Straying from the others, to a remote corner of the meadow, or ever I was aware, I came close upon Gammer Gurney, holding somewhat with much care. "Give ye good den, Mistress Meg" quoth she, "I cannot bear to rob the birds of their nests; but I knows you and yours be kind to dumb creatures, so here's a nest of young ouzels for ye—and I can't call them dumb neither, for they'll sing bravely some o' these days."

"How hast fared of late, Gammer?" quoth I.

"Why, well enough for such as I," she made answer; "since I lost the use of my right hand, I can neither spin, nor nurse sick folk, but I pulls rushes, and that brings me a few pence and I be a good herbalist; only, because I says one or two English prayers, and hates the priests, some folks thinks me a witch."

"But why dost hate the priests?" quoth I. "Never you mind," she gave answer, "I've reasons

many, and for my English prayers, they were taught me by a gentleman I nursed, that's now a saint in heaven, along with poor Joan."

And so she hobbled off, and I felt kindly towards her, I scarce knew why—perhaps because she spake so lovingly of her dead sister, and because of that sister's name. My mother's name was Joan.

July 2nd.

Erasmus is gone. His last saying to Father was, "They will have you at Court yet;" and Father's answer, "When Plato's year comes round."

To me he gave a copy, how precious! of his Testament. "You are an elegant Latinist, Margaret" he was pleased to say, "but if you would drink deeply of the well-springs of wisdom, apply to Greek. The Latins have only shallow rivulets; the Greeks, copious rivers, running over sands of gold. Read Plato; he wrote on marble with a diamond, but above all, read the New Testament. 'Tis the key to the kingdom of Heaven."

To Mr. Gunnel, he said smiling, "Have a care of thyself, dear Gonellus, and take a little wine for thy stomach's sake. The wages of most scholars now-a-days are weak eyes, ill-health, an empty purse, and

short commons. I need only bid thee beware of the two first."

To Bess, "Farewell, Bessy, thank you for mending my bad Latin. When I write to you, I will be sure to sign myself, '*Roterodamius*.' Farewell, sweet Cecily; let me always continue your desired amiable? And you, Jacky—love your book a little more."

"Jack's dear mother, not content with her girls" saith Father, "was always wishing for a boy and at last she had one that means to remain a boy all his life."

"The Dutch schoolmasters thought me dull and heavy" saith Erasmus, "so there is some hope of Jacky yet." And so, stepped into the barge, which we watched to Chelsea Reach. How dull the house has been ever since! Rupert and William have had me into the pavillion to hear the plot of a miracle-play they have already begun to talk over for Christmas, but it seemed to me downright rubbish. Father sleeps in town to-night, so we shall be stupid enough. Bessy hath undertaken to work Father a slipper for his tender foot; and is happy, tracing for the pattern our three moor-cocks and colts; but I am idle and tiresome.

If I had paper, I would begin my projected *Opus*, but I dare not ask Gunnel for any more just yet, nor

have any money to buy some. I wish I had a couple of angels. I think I shall write to Father for them to-morrow; he always likes to hear from us if he is twenty-four hours absent, providing we conclude not with "I have nothing more to say."

July 4th.

I have writ my letter to Father. I almost wish, now, that I had not sent it. Rupert and Will still full of their morality, which really has some fun in it. To ridicule the extravagance of those who, as the saying is, carry their farms and fields on their backs, William proposes to come in, all verdant, with a real model of a farm on his back, and a windmill on his head.

July 5th.

How sweet, how gracious an answer from Father! John Harris has brought me with it the two angels; less prized than this epistle.

July 10th.

Sixteenth birthday. Father away, which made it sad. Mother gave me a pair of blue hose with silk clocks; Mr. Gunnel, an ivory-handled stylus; Bess, a bodkin for my hair; Daisy, a book-mark;

Mercy, a saffron cake ; Jack, a basket ; and Cecil, a nosegay. William's present was fairest of all, but I am hurt with him and myself ; for he offered it so queerly and tagged it with such . . . I refused it, and there's an end. 'Twas unmannerly and unkind of me and I've cried about it since.

Father always gives us a birthday treat ; so, contrived that Mother should take us to see my Lord Cardinal of York go to Westminster in state. We had a merry water-party ; got good places and saw the show, cross-bearers, pillar-bearers, ushers and all. Himself in crimson engrained satin and tippet of sables, with an orange in his hand held to his nose, as though common air were too vile to breathe. What a pompous priest he is ! The Archbishop might well say, "That man is drunk with too much prosperity."

Between dinner and supper, we had a fine skirmish in the straits of Thermopylae. Mr. Gunnel headed the Persians, and Will was Leonidas, with a swashing buckler and a helmet a yard high ; but Mr. Gunnel gave him such a rap on the crest that it went over the wall ; so then William thought there was nothing left for him but to die. Howbeit, as he had been laid low sooner than he had reckoned on, he prolonged his last agonies a good deal and gave one of

the Persians a tremendous kick just as they were about to rifle his pouch. They therefore thought there must be somewhat in it they should like to see ; so held him down in spite of his hitting right and left, and pulled there-from, among sundry lesser matters, a carnation knot of mine. Poor varlet, I wish he would not be so stupid.

After supper, Mother proposed a concert, and we were all singing a round, when, looking up, I saw Father standing in the door-way, with such a happy smile on his face ! He was close behind Rupert and Daisy, who were singing from the same book and advertised them of his coming by gently knocking their heads together ; but I had the first kiss, even before Mother, because of my birthday.

July 11*th.*

It turns out that Father's lateness yester-even was caused by press of business ; a foreign mission having been proposed to him which he resisted as long as he could but was at length reluctantly induced to accept. Length of his stay uncertain, which casts a gloom on all ; but there is so much to do as to give little time to think, and Father is busiest of all ; yet hath found leisure to concert with Mother for us a journey into

the country, which will occupy some of the weeks of his absence. I am full of careful thoughts and forebodings, being naturally of too anxious a disposition. Oh, let me cast all my cares on another! *Fecisti nos ad te, Domine; et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.*

May 27th, 1523.

'Tis so many months agone since that I made an entry in my *libellus*, as that my motto, "*Nulla dies sine linea*," hath somewhat of sarcasm in it. How many things do I begin and leave unfinished! and yet, less from caprice than lack of strength; like him of whom the scripture was writ,—"This man began to build and was not able to finish." My *opus*, for instance; the which my Father's prolonged absence in the autumn and my winter visit to Aunt Nan and Aunt Fan gave me such leisure to carry forward. But alack! leisure was less to seek than learning and when I came back to mine old tasks, leisure was awanting too; and then, by reason of my sleeping in a separate chamber, I was enabled to steal hours from the early morn and hours from the night, and, like unto Solomon's virtuous woman, my candle went not out. But 'twas not to purpose that I worked, like the

virtuous woman, for I was following a jack-o'-lantern ; having forsook the straight path laid down by Erasmus for a foolish path of mine own ; and so I toiled, and blundered, and puzzled, and was mazed ; and then came on that pain in my head. Father said, "What makes Meg so pale ?" and I said not : and at the last, I told Mother there was somewhat throbbing and twisting in the back of mine head, like unto a little worm that would not die ; and she made answer, "Ah, a maggot," and so by her scoff I was shamed. Then I gave over mine *opus*, but the pain did not yet go ; so then I was longing for the dear pleasure and fondly turning over the leaves and wondering would Father be surprised and pleased with it some day, when Father himself came in or ever I was aware. He saith "What hast thou, Meg ?" I faltered and would set it aside. He saith, "Nay, let me see ;" and so takes it from me ; and after the first glance throws himself into a seat, his back to me, and first runs it hastily through, then begins with method and such silence and gravity as that I trembled at his side, and felt what it must be to stand a prisoner at the bar, and he the judge. Sometimes I thought he must be pleased, at others not ; at length, all my fond hopes were ended by his crying, "This will never do. Poor wretch, hath this then been thy

toil? How couldst find time for so much labour? for here hath been trouble enough and to spare. Thou must have stolen it, sweet Meg, from the night and prevented the morning watch. Most dearest! thy Father's own loved child;" and so, caressing me till I gave over my shame and disappointment.

"I need not tell thee, Meg," Father saith, "of the unprofitable labour of Sisyphus, nor of drawing water in a sieve. There are some things, most dear one, that a woman, if she trieth, may do as well as a man; and some she cannot, and some she had better not. Now, I tell thee firmly, since the first pain is the least sharp, that, despite the spirit and genius herein shown, I am avised 'tis work thou canst not and work thou hadst better not do. But judge for thyself; if thou wilt persist, thou shalt have leisure and quiet, and a chamber in my new building, and all the help my gallery of books may afford. But thy Father says, Forbear."

So, what could I say, but "My Father shall never speak to me in vain."

Then he gathered the papers up and said, "Then I shall take temptation out of your way;" and pressing them to his heart as he did so, saith, "They are as dear to me as they can be to you;" and so left me, looking out as though I noted (but I noted not)

the clear-shining Thames. 'Twas twilight, and I stood there I know not how long, alone and lonely ; with tears coming, I knew not why, into mine eyes.

There was a weight in the air, as of coming thunder ; the screaming, ever and anon, of Juno and Argus, inclined me to melancholy, as it always does ; and at length I began to note the moon rising, and the deepening clearness of the water, and the lazy motion of the barges, and the flashes of light whenever the rowers dipped their oars. And then I began to attend to the cries and different sounds from across the waters, and the tolling of a distant bell ; and I fell back on mine old heart-sighing, "*Fecisti nos ad te, Domine ; et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.*"

Or ever the week was gone, my Father had contrived for me another journey to New Hall, to abide with the lay nuns, as he called them, Aunt Nan and Aunt Fan, whom my step-mother loveth not, but whom I love and whom Father loveth. Indeed, 'tis said in Essex that at first he inclined to Aunt Nan rather than to my Mother ; but that, perceiving my Mother affected his company and Aunt Nan affected it not, he diverted his hesitating affections unto her and took her to wife. Howbeit, Aunt Nan loveth him dearly as a sister ought : indeed, she loveth all, except, methinketh, herself, to whom alone,

she is rigid and severe. How holy are my aunts' lives! Cloistered nuns could not be more pure and could scarce be as useful. Though wise, they can be gay; though no longer young, they love the young. And their reward is, the young love them, and I am full sure in this world they seek no better.

Returned to Chelsea, I spake much in praise of mine aunts and of single life. On a certain evening, we maids were set at our needles and samplers on the pavilion steps; and, as folly will out, began to talk of what we would fain have to our lots, should a good fairy start up and grant each a wish. Daisy was for a countess's degree with hawks and hounds. Bess was for founding a college, Mercy a hospital, and she spoke so experimentally of its conditions that I was fain to go partners with her in the same. Cecy commenced, "Supposing I were married; if once that I were married"—on which, Father, who had come up unperceived, burst out laughing and saith, "Well, Dame Cecily, and what state would you keep?" Howbeit, as he and I afterwards paced together, *juxta fluvium*, he did say, "Mercy hath well propounded the conditions of an hospital or alms-house for aged and sick folk, and 'tis a phantasy of mine to set even such a one afoot, and give you the conduct of the same."

From this careless speech, dropped as 'twere by the way, hath sprung mine house of refuge! and oh, what pleasure have I derived from it! How good is my Father! how the poor bless him! and how kind is he, through them, to me! Laying his hand kindly on my shoulder, this morning, he said, "Meg, how fares it with thee now? Have I cured the pain in thy head?" Then, putting the house-key into mine hand, he laughingly added, "'Tis now yours, my joy, by livery and seisin."

August 6th.

I wish William would give me back my Testament. 'Tis one thing to steal a knot or a posie, and another to borrow the most valuable book in the house, and keep it week after week. He sought it with a kind of mystery, so as that I forbear to ask it of him in company, lest I should do him an ill turn, and yet I have none other occasion.

All parties are striving which shall have Erasmus, and all in vain. Even thus it was with him when he was here last,—the Queen would have had him for her Preceptor, the King and Cardinal pressed on him a royal apartment and salary, Oxford and Cambridge contended for him, but his saying was, "All these I value less than my liberty, my studies and my

literary toils." How much greater is he than those who would confer on him greatness! No man of letters hath equal reputation, or is so much courted.

Aug. 7th.

Yester-even, after overlooking the men playing at loggats, Father and I strayed along Thernopylæ into the home-field and as we sauntered together under the elms, he saith with a sigh, "Jack is Jack and no More . . . he will never be anything. And 'twere not for my beloved wenches, I should be an unhappy Father. But what though!—my Meg is better unto me than ten sons, and it maketh no difference at harvest-time whether our corn were put into the ground by a man or a woman."

While I was turning in my mind what excuse I might make for John, Father taketh me at unawares by a sudden change of subject, saying, "Come, tell me, Meg, why canst not affect Will Roper?"

I was a good while silent, at length made answer, "He is so unlike all I esteem and admire . . . so unlike all I have been taught to esteem and admire by you."——

"Have at you," he returned laughing, "I wist not I had been sharpening weapons against myself.

True, he is neither Achilles nor Hector, nor even Paris, but yet well enough, meseems, as times go—smarter and comelier than either Heron or Dancey."

I, faltering, made answer, "Good looks affect me but little—'tis in his better part I feel the want. He cannot . . . discourse, for instance, to one's mind and soul, like unto you, dear Father or Erasmus."

"I should marvel if he could," returned Father gravely, "thou art mad, my daughter, to look in a youth of Will's years, for the mind of a man of fifty. What were Erasmus and I, dost thou suppose, at Will's age? Alas, Meg, I should not like you to know what I was. Men called me the boy-sage, and I know not what, but in my heart and head was a world of sin and folly. Thou mightest as well expect Will to have my hair, eyes and teeth, all getting the worse for wear, as to have the fruits of my life-long experience, in some cases full dearly bought. Take him for what he is, match him by the young minds of his own standing: consider how long and closely we have known him. His parts are, surely, not amiss: he hath more book-lore than Dancey, more mother wit than Allington."

"But why need I to concern myself about him?" I exclaimed; "Will is very well in his way: why

should we cross each other's paths? I am young, I have much to learn, I love my studies,—why interrupt them with other and less wise thoughts?"

"Because nothing can be wise that is not practical," returned Father, "and I teach my children philosophy to fit them for living in the world, not above it. One may spend a life in dreaming over Plato, and yet go out of it without leaving the world a whit the better for our having made part of it. 'Tis to little purpose we study, if it only makes us exact perfections in others which they may in vain seek for in ourselves. It is not even necessary or good for us to live entirely with congenial spirits. The vigorous tempers the inert, the passionate is evened by the cool-tempered, the prosaic balances the visionary. Would thy Mother suit me better, dost thou suppose, if she could discuss polemics like Luther or Melancthon? Even thine own sweet Mother, Meg, was less affected to study than thou art,—she learnt to love it for my sake, but I made her what she was."

And, with a sudden burst of fond recollection, he hid his eyes on my shoulder, and for a moment or so, cried bitterly. As for me, I shed, oh! such salt tears! . . .

August 17th.

Entering on the sudden into Mercy's chamber, I found her all bewept and waped, poring over an old kirtle of Mother's she had bidden her re-line with buckram. Could not make out whether she were sick of her task, had had words with Mother, or had some secret inquietation of her own; but as she is a girl of few words, I found I had best leave her alone after a caress and kind saying or two. We all have our troubles.

Wednesday, 19th.

. . . . . .

Truly may I say so. Here have they taken a fever of some low sort in my house of refuge, and Mother, fearing it may be the sickness, will not have me go near it, lest I should bring it home. Mercy, howbeit, hath besought her so earnestly to let her go and nurse the sick, that Mother hath granted her prayer, on condition she returneth not till the fever bates . . . thus setting her life at lower value than our own. Dear Mercy! I would fain be her mate.

21st.

We are all mighty glad that Rupert Allington hath at length zealously embraced the study of the law.

'Twas much to be feared at the first there was no application in him, and though we all pitied him when Father first brought him home, a pillaged, portionless client, with none other to espouse his rights, yet 'twas a pity soon allied with contempt when we found how empty he was, caring for nought but archery and skittles and the popinjay out of the house, and dicing and tables within, which Father would on no excuse permit. So he had to conform, ruefully enough and hung piteously on hand for awhile. I mind me of Bess's saying, about Christmas, "Heaven send us open weather while Allington is here; I don't believe he is one that will bear shutting up." Howbeit, he seemed to incline towards Daisy, who is handsome enough, and cannot be hindered of two hundred pounds, and so he kept within bounds, and when Father got him his cause he was mightily thankful and would have left us out of hand, but Father persuaded him to let his estate recover itself, and turn the meantime to profit, and, in short, so wrought on him, that he hath now become a student in right earnest.

22nd.

So we are going to lose not only Mr. Clement, but Mr. Gunnel! How sorry we all are! It

seemeth he hath long been debating for and against the Church, and at length finds his mind so strongly set towards it, as he can keep out of it no longer. Well! we shall lose a good Master and the Church will gain a good servant. Drew will supply his place, that is, according to his best, but our worthy Welshman careth so little for young people, and is so abstract from the world about him, that we shall oft feel our loss. Father hath promised Gonellus his interest with the Cardinal.

I fell into disgrace for holding speech with Mercy over the pales, but she is confident there is no danger; the sick are doing well and none of the whole have fallen sick. She says Gammer Gurney is as tender of her as if she were her daughter and will let her do no vile or painful office, so as she hath little to do but read and pray for the poor souls, and feed them with savoury messes, and they are all so harmonious and full of cheer as to be like birds in a nest. Mercy deserves their blessings more than I. Were I a free agent, she should not be alone now, and I hope never to be withheld therefrom again.

30*th.*

Busied with my flowers the chief of the forenoon, I was fain to rest in the pavilion, when, entering therein, whom should I stumble upon but William, laid at length on the floor, with his arms under his head and his book on the ground. I was withdrawing briskly enough, when he called out, "Don't go away, since you *are* here," in a tone so rough, so unlike his usual key, as that I paused in a maze and then saw that his eyes were red. He sprung to his feet and said, "Meg, come and talk to me;" and, taking my hand in his, stepped quickly forth without another word said, till we reached the elm-tree walk. I marvelled to see him so moved, and expected to hear somewhat that should displease me, scarce knowing what; however, I might have guessed at it from then till now, without ever nearing the truth. His first words were, "I wish Erasmus had never crossed the threshold; he has made me very unhappy;" then, seeing me stare, "Be not his council just now, dear Meg, but bind up, if thou canst, the wounds he has made. There be some wounds, thou knowest, though but of a cut finger or the like, that we cannot well bind up for ourselves."

I made answer, "I am a young and unskilled leech."

He replied, "But you have a quick wit, and patience, and kindness, and for a woman, are not scant of learning."

"Nay," I said, "but Mr. Gunnel——"

"Gunnel would be the last to help me," interrupts Will, "nor can I speak to your Father. He is always too busy now . . . besides,——"

"Father Francis?" I put in.

"Father Francis?" repeats Will, with a shake of the head and a rueful smile; "dost thou think, Meg, he could answer me if I put to him Pirate's question, 'What is Truth?'"

"We know already," quoth I.

Saith Will, "What do we know?"

I paused, then made answer reverently, "That Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life."

"Yes," he exclaimed, clapping his hands together in a strange sort of passion; "that we *do* know, blessed be God, and other foundation can or ought no man to lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But, Meg, is this the principle of our Church?"

"Yea, verily," I steadfastly replied.

"Then, how has it been overlaid," he hurriedly went on, "with men's inventions! St. Paul speaks of a sacrifice once offered: we hold the Host to be a continual sacrifice. Holy Writ telleth us, where a

tree falls it must lie ; we are taught that our prayers may free souls from purgatory. The Word saith, 'By faith ye are saved ;' the Church saith, we may be saved by our works. It is written, 'the idols He shall utterly abolish ;' we worship figures of gold and silver . . ."

"Hold, hold," I said, "I dare not listen to this. . . . You are wrong, you know you are wrong."

"How and where ?" he saith ; "only tell me, I long to be put right."

"Our images are but symbols of our saints," I made answer ; "'tis only the ignorant and unlearned that worship the mere wood and stone."

"But why worship saints at all ?" persisted Will ; "where's your warrant for it ?"

I said, "Heaven has warranted it by sundry and special miracles at diverse times and places. I may say to you, Will, as Socrates to Agathon, 'You may easily argue against me, but you cannot argue against the truth.'"

"Oh, put me not off with Plato," he impatiently replied, "refer me but to Holy Writ."

"How can I," quoth I, "when you have taken away my Testament, ere I had half gone through it ?

"'Tis this book, I fear me, poor Will, hath unsettled

thee. Our Church, indeed, saith the unlearned wrest it to their destruction."

"And yet the Apostle saith," rejoined Will, "that it contains all things necessary to our salvation."

"Doubtless it doth, if we knew but where to find them," I replied.

"And how find, unless we seek?" he pursued, "and how know which road to take, when we find the Scripture and the Church at issue."

"Get some wiser head to advise us," I rejoined.

"But and if the obstacle remains the same?"

"I cannot suppose that," I somewhat impatiently returned, "God's Word and God's Church must agree; 'tis only we that make them at issue."

"Ah, Meg, that is just such an answer as Father Francis might give—it solves no difficulty. If, to all human reason, they pull opposite ways, by which shall we abide? I know; I am certain. '*Tu, Domine Jesu, es Justitia mea!*'"

He looked so rapt, with clasped hands and upraised eyes, as that I could not but look on him and hear him with solemnity. At length I said, "If you know and are certain, you have no longer any doubts for me to lay, and with your will, we will hold this discourse no longer, for however moving and however considerable its subject matter may be, it approaches

forbidden ground too nearly for me to feel it safe, and I question whether it savoureth not of heresy. However, Will, I most heartily pity you, and will pray for you."

"Do, Meg, do," he replied, "and say not to any one of this matter."

"Indeed I shall not, for I think 'twould bring you if not me into trouble; but, since thou hast sought my counsel, Will, receive it now and take it . . ."

He saith, "What is it?"

"To read less, pray more, fast and use such discipline as our Church recommends and I question not this temptation will depart. Make a fair trial."

And so, away from him, though he would fain have said more; and I have kept mine own word of praying for him full earnestly, for it pitieth me to see him in such case.

September 2nd.

Poor Will, I never see him look grave now, nor hear him sigh, without thinking I know the cause of his secret discontentation. He hath, I believe, followed my counsel to the letter, for though the men's quarter of the house is so far apart from ours, it hath come round to me through Barbara, who had it from her brother, that Mr. Roper hath of late lain on the

ground and used a knotted cord. As 'tis one of the acts of mercy to relieve others, when we can, from satanic doubts and inquietations, I have been at some pains to make an abstract of such passages from the Fathers, and such narratives of noted and undeniable miracles as cannot, I think, but carry conviction with them, and I hope they may minister to his soul's comfort.

Tuesday 4th.

Supped with my Lord Sands. Mother played mumchance with Milady, but Father, who saith he would rather feast a hundred poor men that eat at one rich man's table, came not in till late, on plea of business. My Lord told him the King had visited him not long ago, and was so well content with his manor as to wish it were his own, for the singular fine air and pleasant growth of wood. In fine, wound up the evening with music. My Lady hath a pair of fine-toned clavichords, and a mandoline that stands five feet high ; the largest in England, except that of Lady Mary Dudley. The sound, indeed is powerful, but methinketh the instrument ungainly for a woman. Lord Sands sang us a new ballad, "*The King's Hunt's up*," which Father affected hugely. I lacked spirit to sue my Lord for the words, he being

so free-spoken as always to dash me ; howbeit, I mind they ran somewhat thus :

" The Hunt is up, the Hunt is up,
And it is well nigh day,
Harry our King has gone hunting
To bring his deer to bay.
The East is bright with morning light,
And darkness it is fled,
And the merry horn wakes up the morn
To leave his idle bed.
Behold the skies with golden dyes,
Are . . ."

—The rest hath escaped me, albeit I know there was some burden of Hey-tantara, where my Lord did stamp and snap his fingers. He is a merry heart.

1524, *October.*

Saith Lord Rutland to my Father, in his acute sneering way, "Ah, ah, Sir Thomas, *Honores mutant mores.*"

"Not so, in faith, my Lord," returns Father "but have a care lest we translate the proverb, and say honours change *manners.*"

It served him right, and the jest is worth preserving, because 'twas not premeditated, as my Lord's very likely was, but retorted at once and in self-defence. I don't believe honours *have* changed the *Mores.* As

Father told Mother, there's the same face under the hood. 'Tis comic, too, the fulfilment of Erasmus' prophecy.

Plato's year has not come round, but they have got Father to Court and the King seems minded never to let him go. For us, we have the same untamed spirits and unconstrained course of life as ever, neither let nor hindered in our daily studies, though we dress somewhat braver, and see more company. Mother's head was a little turned, at first, by the change and enlargement of the household . . . the acquisition of clerk of the kitchen, surveyor of the dresser, yeoman of the pastry, etc. ; but, as Father laughingly told her, the increase of her cares soon steadied her wits, for she found she had twenty unthrifts to look after instead of half-a-dozen. And the same with himself. His responsibilities are so increased, that he grudges at every hour the Court steals from his family, and vows, now and then, he will leave off joking, that the King may the sooner weary of him. But this is only in jest, for he feels it is a power given him over lighter minds, which he may exert to useful and high purpose. Only it keepeth him from needing Damocles' sword ; he trusts not in the favour of princes nor in the voice of the people and keeps his soul as a weaned child. 'Tis much for us now to get

an hour's leisure with him, and makes us feel what our old privileges were when we knew them not. Still, I'm pleased without being over elated, at his having risen to his proper level.

The King took us by surprise this morning : Mother had scarce time to slip on her scarlet gown and coif, ere he was in the house. His Grace was mighty pleasant to all, and, at going, saluted all round, which Bessy took humorously, Daisy immovably, Mercy humbly, I distastefully, and Mother delightedly. She calls him a fine man ; he is indeed big enough, and like to become too big ; with long slits of eyes that gaze freely on all, as who should say, "Who dare let or hinder us ?" His brow betokens sense and frankness, his eyebrows are supercilious and his cheeks puffy. A rolling, straddling gait, and abrupt speech.

The other evening, as Father and I were, unwontedly, strolling together down the lane, there accosts us a shabby poor fellow, with something unsettled in his eye. . . .

"Master, Sir Knight, and may it please your Judgeship, my name is Patteson."

"Very likely," says Father, "and my name is More, but what is that to the purpose ?"

"And that is *more* to the purpose, you might have said," returned the other.

"Why, so I might," says Father, "but how should I have proved it?"

"You who are a lawyer should know best about that," rejoined the poor knave; "'tis too hard for poor Patteson."

"Well, but who are you?" says Father, "and what do you want of me?"

"Don't you mind me?" says Patteson; "I played Hold-your-tongue last Christmas revel was five years, and they called me a smart chap then, but last Martinmas I fell from the church-steeple, and shook my brain-pan, I think, for its contents have seemed addled ever since; so what I want now is to be made a fool."

"Then you are not one already?" says Father.

"If I were," says Patteson, "I should not have come to *you*."

"Why, like cleaves to like, you know they say," says Father.

"Aye," says the other, "but I've reason and feeling enough, too, to know you are no fool, though I thought you might want one. Great people like them at their tables, I've heard say, though I am sure I can't guess why, for it makes me sad to see fools laughed at; nevertheless, as I get laughed at already, methinketh I may as well get paid for the job if I can, being unable, now, to do a stroke of work in hot

weather. And I'm the only son of my mother, and she is a widow. But perhaps I'm not bad enough."

"I know not that, poor knave," says Father, touched with quick pity, "and for those that laugh at fools, my opinion, Patteson, is that they are the greater fools who laugh. To tell you the truth, I had had no mind to take a fool into mine establishment, having always had a fancy to be prime fooler in it myself; however, you incline me to change my purpose, for as I said anon, like cleaves to like, so, I'll tell you what we will do—divide the business and go halves—I continuing the fooling, and thou receiving the salary; that is, if I find on inquiry, thou art given to no vice, including that of scurrility."

"May it like your goodness," says poor Patteson, "I've been the subject, oft, of scurrility, and affect it too little to offend that way myself. I ever keep a civil tongue in my head, especially among young ladies."

"That minds me," says Father, "of a butler who said he always was sober, especially when he only had water to drink. Can you read and write?"

"Well, and what if I cannot?" returns Patteson, "there never was but one, I ever heard of, that knew letters, never having learnt, and well he might, for he made them that made them."

"Meg, there is sense in this poor fellow," says Father, "we will have him home and be kind to him."

And, sure enough, we have done so and been so ever since.

Tuesday 25th.

A glance at the anteceding pages of this *libellus* meshoweth poor Will Roper at the season his love-fit for me was at its height. He troubleth me with it no longer nor with his religious disquietations. Hard study of the law hath filled his head with other matters, and made him more rational, and by consequents, more agreeable. 'Twas one of those preferences young people sometimes manifest, themselves know neither why nor wherefore, and are shamed, afterwards, to be reminded of. I'm sure I shall never remind him. There was nothing in me to fix a rational or passionate regard. I have neither Bess's wit nor white teeth, nor Daisy's dark eyes, nor Mercy's dimple. A plain-favoured girl, with changeful spirits, —that's all.

26th.

Patteson's latest jest was taking precedence of Father yesterday with the saying, "Give place, brother ; you

are but jester to King Harry and I'm jester to Sir Thomas More ; I'll leave you to decide which is the greater man of the two."

"Why, gossip," cries Father, "his Grace would make two of me."

"Not a bit of it," returns Patteson, "he's big enough for two such as you are, I grant ye, but the King can't make two of you. No ! Lords and Commons may make a King, but a king can't make a Sir Thomas More."

"Yes, he can," rejoins Father, "he can make me Lord Chancellor, and then he will make me more than I am already ; *ergo*, he will make Sir Thomas more."

"But what I mean is," persists the fool, "that the king can't make such another as you are, any more than all the king's horses and all the king's men can put Humpty-dumpty together again, which is an ancient riddle, and full of marrow. And so he'll find, if ever he lifts thy head off from thy shoulders, which God forbid !"

Father delighteth in sparring with Patteson far more than in jesting with the king, whom he always looks on as a lion that may, any minute, fall on him and rend him. Whereas, with the other, he ungirds his mind. Their banter commonly exceeds not pleasantry,

but Patteson is never without an answer ; and, although, maybe, each amuses himself now and then with thinking, "I'll put him up with such a question," yet, once begun, the skein runs off the reel without a knot, and shows the excellent nature of both, so free are they alike from malice and over-license. Sometimes their cuts are neater than common listeners apprehend. I've seen Rupert and Will, in fencing, make their swords flash in the sun at every parry and thrust ; again, owing to some change in mine own position or the decline of the sun, the scintillations have escaped me, though I've known their rays must have been emitted in some quarter all the same.

Patteson, with one of Argus's cast feathers in his hand, is at this moment beneath my lattice, astride on a stone balustrade, while Bessy, whom he much affects, is sitting on the steps, feeding her peacocks. Saith Patteson, "Canst tell, mistress, why peacocks have so many eyes in their tails, and yet can only see with two in their heads ?"

"Because those two make them so vain already, fool," says Bess, "that were they always beholding their own glory, they would be intolerable."

"And besides that," says Patteson, "the less we see or hear, either, of what passes behind our backs, the better for us, since knaves will make mouths at us

then, for as glorious as we may be. Canst tell me, mistress, why the peacock was the last bird that went into the ark?"

"First tell me, fool," returns Bess, "how thou knowest that it was so?"

"Nay, a fool may ask a question would puzzle a wizard to answer," rejoins Patteson; "I might ask you, for example, where they got their fresh kitchen-stuff in the ark, or whether the birds ate other than grains, or the wild beasts other than flesh. It needs must have been a granary."

"We never show ourselves such fools," says Bess, "as in seeking to know more than is written. They had enough, if none to spare, and we scarce can tell how little is enough for bare sustenance in a state of perfect inaction. If the creatures were kept low, they were all the less fierce."

"Well answered, mistress," says Patteson, "but tell me, why do you wear two crosses?"

"Nay, fool," returns Bess, "I wear but one."

"Oh, but I say you wear two," says Patteson, "one at your girdle and one that nobody sees. We all wear the unseen one, you know. Some have theirs of gold, all carved and shaped, so as you hardly tell it for a cross . . . like my Lord Cardinal, for instance . . . but it is one, for all that. And others, of iron,

that eateth into their hearts . . . methinketh Master Roper's must be one of them. For me, I'm content with one of wood, like that our dear Lord bore; what was good enough for Him is good enough for me, and I've no temptation to show it, as it isn't fine, nor yet to chafe at it, for being rougher than my neighbour's, nor yet to make myself a second because it is not hard enough. Do you take me, mistress?"

"I take you for what you are," says Bess, "a poor fool."

"Nay, niece," says Patteson, "my brother your Father hath made me rich."

"I mean," says Bess, "you have more wisdom than wit, and a real fool has neither, therefore you are only a make-believe fool."

"Well, there are many make-believe sages," says Patteson; "for mine part, I never aim to be thought a *Hiccius Doccius*."

"A *hic est doctus*, fool, you mean," interrupts Bess.

"Perhaps I do," rejoins Patteson, "since other folks so oft know better what we mean than we ourselves. All I would say is, I never set up for a conjuror. One can see as far into a millstone as other people, without being that. For example, when a man is overtaken with qualms of conscience for having married his brother's widow, when she is no longer so young

and fair as she was a score of years ago, we know what that's a sign of. And when an Ipswich butcher's son takes on him the state of my Lord Pope, we know what that's a sign of. Nay, if a young gentlewoman become dainty at her sizes, and sluttish in her apparel, we . . . as I live, here comes Giles Heron, with a fish in's mouth."

Poor Bess involuntarily turned her head quickly towards the watergate ; on which, Patteson, laughing as he lay on his back, points upward with his peacock's feather, and cries, "Overhead, Mistress ! see there he goes. Sure, you looked not to see Master Heron making towards us between the posts and flower-pots, eating a dried ling ?" laughing as wildly as though he were verily a natural.

Bess, without a word, shook the crumbs from her lap, and was turning into the house, when he withholds her a minute in a perfectly altered fashion, saying, "There be some works, Mistress, our Confessors tell us be works of supererogation . . . is not that the word ? . . . I learn a long one now and then . . . such as be setting food before a full man, or singing to a deaf one, or buying for one's pigs a silver trough, or, for the matter of that, casting pearls before a dunghill cock, or fishing for a heron, which is well able to fish for itself, and is an ill-natured bird

after all, that pecks the hand of his mistress, and, for all her kindness to him, will not think of Bessy More."

How apt all are to abuse unlimited license! Yet 'twas good counsel.

1525, *July* 2.

So my fate is settled. Who knoweth at sunrise what will chance before sunset? No; the Greeks and Romans might speak of chance and of fate, but we must not. Ruth's hap was to light on the field of Boaz: but what she thought casual, the Lord had contrived.

First, he gives me the marmot. Then, the marmot dies. Then, I, having kept the creature so long and being naturally tender, must cry a little over it. Then Will must come in and find me drying mine eyes. Then he must, most unreasonably, suppose that I could not have loved the poor animal for its own sake so much as for his; and, thereupon, falls a love-making in such downright earnest, that I, being already somewhat upset, and knowing 'twould please Father . . . and hating to be perverse, . . . and thinking much better of Will since he hath studied so hard, and given so largely to the poor, and left off broaching his heteroclite opinions . . . I say, I supposed it must be so, some time or another, so

'twas no use hanging back for ever and ever, so now there's an end, and I pray God give us a quiet life.

No one would suppose me reckoning on a quiet life if they knew how I've cried all this forenoon, ever since I got quit of Will, by Father's carrying him off to Westminster. He'll tell Father, I know, as they go along in the barge, or else coming back, which will be soon now, though I've taken no heed of the hour. I wish 'twere cold weather, and that I had a sore throat, or stiff neck, or somewhat that might reasonably send me a-bed, and keep me there till to-morrow morning. But I'm quite well, and 'tis the dog-days, and cook is thumping the rolling-pin on the dresser, and dinner is being served, and here comes Father.

1528. *September.*

Father hath had some words with the Cardinal. 'Twas touching the draught of some foreign treaty which the Cardinal offered for his criticism, or rather, for his commendation, which Father could not give. This nettled his Grace, who exclaimed,—"By the Mass, thou art the veriest fool of all the Council." Father, smiling, rejoined, "God be thanked, that the King our Master hath but one fool therein."

The Cardinal may rage, but he can't rob him of

the royal favour. The King was here yesterday, and walked for an hour or so about the garden, with his arm round Father's neck. Will could not help felicitating Father upon it afterwards, to which Father made answer, "I thank God I find his Grace my very good lord indeed and I believe he doth as singularly favour me as any subject within this realm. Howbeit, son Roper, I will tell thee between ourselves, I feel no cause to be proud thereof, for if my head would win him a castle in France, it should not fail to fly off."

— Father is graver than he used to be. No wonder. He hath much on his mind; the calls on his time and thought are beyond belief, but God is very good to him. His favour at home and abroad is immense: he hath good health, so have we all; and his family are established to his mind and settled all about him, still under the same fostering roof. Considering that I am the most ordinary of his daughters, 'tis singular I should have secured the best husband. Daisy lives peaceably with Rupert Allington, and is as indifferent, meseemeth, to him as to all the world beside. He, on his part, loves her and their children with devotion, and would pass half his time in the nursery. Dancey always had a hot temper and now and then plagues Bess; but she

lets no one know it but me. Sometimes she comes into my chamber and cries a little, but the next kind word brightens her up, and I verily believe her pleasures far exceed her pains. Giles Heron lost her through his own fault, and might have regained her good opinion after all, had he taken half the pains for her sake he now takes for her younger sister: I cannot think how Cecy can favour him, yet I suspect he will win her, sooner or later. As to mine own dear Will, 'tis the kindest, purest nature, the finest soul, the . . . and yet how I was senseless enough once to undervalue him!

Yes, I am a happy wife; a happy daughter; a happy Mother. When my little Bill stroked dear Father's face just now and murmured, "Pretty!" he burst out a-laughing and cried,—

"You are like the young Cyrus, who exclaimed, 'Oh! Mother, how pretty is my grandfather!' And yet, according to Xenophon, the old gentleman was so rouged and made up, as that none but a child would have admired him!"

"That's not the case," I observed, "with Bill's grandfather."

"He's a More all over," says Father, fondly. "Make a pun, Meg, if thou canst, about *Amor*, *amore* or *amores*. 'Twill only be the thousand and

first on our name. Here little knave, see these cherries; tell me who thou art, and thou shalt have one. 'More! More!' I knew it, sweet villain. Take them all."

I oft sit for an hour or more, watching Hans Holbein at his brush. He hath a rare gift of limning; and has, besides, the advantage of dear Erasmus his recommendation, for whom he hath already painted our likenesses, but I think he has made us very ugly. His portraiture of my grandfather is marvellous; nevertheless, I look in vain for the spirituality which our Lucchese friend, Antonio Bonvisi, tells us is to be found in the productions of the Italian schools.

Holbein loves to paint with the light coming in upon his work from above. He says a light from above puts objects in their proper light and shows their just proportions; a light from beneath reverses all the natural shadows. Surely, this hath some truth if we spiritualise it.

June 2nd.

Rupert's cousin, Rosamond Allington, is our guest. She is as beautiful as . . . not an angel, for she lacks the look of goodness, but very beautiful indeed. She cometh hither from Hever Castle, her account

of the affairs whereof I like not. Mistress Anne is not there at present; indeed, she is now always hanging about Court and followeth somewhat too literally the scriptural injunction to Solomon's spouse —to forget her Father's house. The King likes well enough to be compared to Solomon, but Mistress Anne is not his spouse yet, nor ever will be, I hope. Flattery and frenchified habits have spoilt her, I trow.

Rosamond says there is not a good chamber in the castle, even the ball-room, which is on the upper floor of all, being narrow and low. On a rainy day, long ago, she and Mistress Anne were playing at shuttlecock therein, when Rosamond's foot tripped at some unevenness in the floor and Mistress Anne, with a laugh, cried out, "Mind you go not down into the dungeon"—then pulled up a trap-door in the ball-room floor, by an iron ring, and made Rosamond look down into an unknown depth; all in the blackness of darkness. 'Tis an awful thing to have only a step from a ball-room to a dungeon! I'm glad we live in a modern house; we have no such fearsome sights here.

September 26th.

How many, many tears have I shed! Poor, imprudent Will.

To think of his escape from the Cardinal's fangs, and yet that he will probably repeat the offence! This morning Father and he had a long, and, I fear me, fruitless debate in the garden; on returning from which, Father took me aside and said,—

"Meg, I have borne a long time with thine husband; I have reasoned and argued with him and still given him my poor, fatherly counsel; but I perceive none of this can call him home again. And therefore, Meg, I will no longer dispute with him." . . .

"Oh, Father!" . . . "Nor yet will I give him over; but I will set another way to work, and get me to God and pray for him."

And have not I done so already?

27th.

I fear me they parted unfriendly; I heard Father say, "Thus much I have a right to bind thee to, that thou indoctrinate not her in thine own heresies. Thou shalt not imperil the salvation of my child."

Since this there has been an irresistible gloom on our spirits, a cloud between my husband's soul and mine, without a word spoken. I pray, but my prayers seem dead.

Last night, after seeking unto this saint and that,

methought, "Why not apply unto the fountain-head? Maybe these holy spirits may have limitations set to the power of their intercessions—at any rate, the ears of Mary mother are open to all."

So I began, "*Eia mater, fons amoris.*" . . . Then methought, "But I am only asking her to intercede —I'll mount a step higher still." . . .

Then I turned to the great Intercessor of all. But methought, "Still he intercedes with another, although the same. And His own saying was, 'In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, He will give it you?'" So I did.

I fancy I fell asleep with the tears on my cheek. Will had not come upstairs. Then came a heavy, heavy sleep, not such as giveth rest; and a dark, wild dream. Methought I was tired of waiting for Will and became alarmed. The night seemed a month long, and at last I grew so weary of it, that I arose, put on some clothing, and went in search of him whom my soul loveth. Soon I found him, sitting in a muse; and said, "Will, dear Will?" but he heard me not; and, going up to touch him, I was amazed to be brought short up or ever I reached him, by something invisible betwixt us, hard, and clear, and cold, . . . in short,

a wall of ice! So it seemed, in my strange dream. I pushed at it, but could not move it; called to him but could not make him hear: and all the while my breath, I suppose, raised a vapour on the glassy substance, that grew thicker and thicker, so as slowly to hide him from me. I could discern his head and shoulders, but not see down to his heart. Then I shut mine eyes in despair, and when I opened them, he was hidden altogether.

Then I prayed. I put my hot brow against the ice, and I kept weeping hot tears, and the warm breath of prayer kept issuing from my lips and still I was persisting, when, or ever I knew how, the ice began to melt! I felt it giving way! and looking up, could in joyful surprise just discern the lineaments of a figure close at the other side; the face turned away but yet in the guise of listening. And, images being apt to seem magnified and distorted through vapours, methought 'twas another bigger than Will, yet himself, nothing less; and, the barrier between us having sunk away to breast-height, I laid mine hand on his shoulder, and he turned his head, smiling, though in silence, and . . . oh, Heaven! 'twas not Will, but——

What could I do, even in my dream, but fall at his feet? What could I do, waking, but the

same? 'Twas grey of morn; I was feverish and unrefreshed, but I wanted no more lying in bed. Will had arisen and gone forth; and I, as quickly as I could make myself ready, sped after him.

I know not what I expected, nor what I meant to say. The moment I opened the door of his closet, I stopped short. There he stood, in the centre of the chamber; his hand resting flat on an open book, his head raised somewhat up, his eyes fixed on something or some one, as though in speaking communion with them; his whole visage lightened up and glorified with an unspeakable calm and grandeur that seemed to transfigure him before me; and, when he heard my step, he turned about, and instead of histing me away, held out his arms. . . . We parted without need to utter a word.

June, 1530.

Events have followed too quick and thick for me to note them. First, Father's embassy to Cambray, which I should have grieved more on our own accounts, had it not broken off all further collision with Will. Thoroughly homesick, while abroad, poor Father was; then, on his return, he no sooner set his foot a-land, than the King summoned him

to Woodstock. 'Twas a couple of nights after he left us, that Will and I were roused by Patteson's shouting beneath our window, "Fire, fire, quoth Jeremiah!" and the house was on fire, sure enough. Great part of the men's quarter, together with all the out-houses and barns, consumed without remedy and all through the carelessness of John Holt. Howbeit, no lives were lost, nor any one much hurt; and we thankfully obeyed dear Father's behest so soon as we received the same, that we would get to Church, and there, upon our knees, return humble and hearty thanks to Almighty God for our late deliverance from a fearful death. Also, at Father's desire, we made up to the poor people on our premises their various losses, which he bade us do, even if it left him without so much as a spoon.

But then came an equally unlooked-for, and more appalling event: the fall of my Lord Cardinal, whereby my Father was shortly raised to the highest pinnacle of professional greatness; being made Lord Chancellor, to the content, in some sort, of Wolsey himself, who said he was the only man fit to be his successor.

The unheard of splendour of his installation dazzled the vulgar; while the wisdom that marked the admirable discharge of his daily duties, won the

respect of all thinking men but surprized none who already knew Father. On the day succeeding his being sworn in, Patteson marched hither, and thither, bearing a huge placard, inscribed, "Partnership dissolved;" and apparelled himself in an old suit, on which he had bestowed a coating of black paint, with weepers of white paper; assigning for it that "his brother was dead." "For now," quoth he, "that they have made him Lord Chancellor, we shall never see Sir Thomas more."

Now, although the poor Cardinal was commonly held to show much judgment in his decisions, owing to the natural soundness of his understanding, yet, being no lawyer, abuses had multiplied during his Chancellorship, more especially in the way of enormous fees and gratuities. Father, not content with shunning base lucre in his proper person, will not let any one under him, to his knowledge, touch a bribe; whereat Dancey, after his funny fashion, complains, saying,—

"The fingers of my Lord Cardinal's veriest doorkeepers were tipped with gold, but I, since I married your daughter, have got no picking; which in your case may be commendable, but in mine is nothing profitable."

Father, laughing, makes answer,—"Your case is

hard, son Dancey, but I can only say for your comfort, that, so far as honesty and justice are concerned, if mine own Father, whom I reverence dearly, stood before me on the one hand, and the devil, whom I hate extremely, on the other, yet, the cause of the latter being just, I should give the devil his due."

Giles Heron hath found this to his cost. Presuming on his near connexion with my Father, he refused an equitable accommodation of a suit, which, thereon, coming into court, Father's decision was given flat against him.

His decision against Mother was equally impartial, and had something comic in it. Thus it befell.— A beggar-woman's little dog, which had been stolen from her, was offered my Mother for sale, and she bought it for a jewel of no great value. After a week or so, the owner finds where her dog is and cometh to make complaint of the theft to Father, then sitting in his hall. Saith Father, "Let's have a fair hearing in open court; thou, mistress, stand there where you be, to have impartial justice; and thou, Dame Alice, come up hither, because thou art of the higher degree. Now then, call each of you the puppy, and see which he will follow." So Sweetheart, in spite of Mother, springs off to the old beggar-woman, who, unable

to keep from laughing, and yet moved at Mother's loss, saith,—

"Tell thee what, Mistress . . . thee shalt have one for a groat."

"Nay," saith Mother, "I won't mind giving thee a piece of gold;" so the bargain was satisfactorily concluded.

Father's despatch of business is such, that, one morning before the end of term, he was told there was no other cause nor petition to be set before him, the which, being a case unparalleled, he desired might be formally recorded.

He never commences business in his own Court without first stepping into the court of King's bench and there kneeling down to receive my grandfather's blessing. Will saith 'tis worth a world to see the unction with which the dear old man bestows it on him.

In rogation-week, following the Rood as usual round the parish, Heron counselled him to go on horseback for the greater seemliness, but he made answer that 'twould be unseemly indeed for the servant to ride after his Master going afoot.

His Grace of Norfolk, coming yesterday to dine with him, finds him in the Church-choir, singing, with a surplice on.

"What?" cries the Duke, as they walk home together, "my Lord Chancellor playing the parish-clerk? Sure, you dishonour the King and his office."

"Nay," says Father, smiling, "your Grace must not deem that the King, your Master and mine, will be offended at my honouring *his* Master."

Sure, 'tis pleasant to hear Father taking the upper hand of these great folks: and to have them coming and going, and waiting his pleasure, because he is the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

True, indeed, with Wolsey 'twas once the same; but Father need not fear the same ruin; because he hath Him for his friend, Whom Wolsey said would not have forsaken him had he served Him as he served his earthly Master. 'Twas a misproud priest, and there's the truth of it. And Father is not misproud; and I don't believe we are; though proud of him we cannot fail to be.

And I know not why we may not be pleased with prosperity, as well as patient under adversity; as long as we say, "Thou, Lord, hast made our hill so strong." 'Tis more difficult to bear with comeliness, doubtless; and envious folks there will be; and we know all things have an end and every sweet hath its sour, and every fountain its fall; but . . . 'tis very pleasant for all that.

Tuesday, 31*st*, 1532.

Who could have thought that those ripe grapes whereof dear Gaffer ate so plentifully, should have ended his days? This event hath filled the house with mourning. He had us all about his bed to receive his blessing; and 'twas piteous to see Father fall upon his face, as Joseph on the face of Jacob, and weep upon him and kiss him. Like Jacob, my grandsire lived to see his duteous son attain to the height of earthly glory, his heart unspoiled and untouched.

July, 1532.

The days of mourning for my grandsire are at an end; yet Father still goeth heavily. This forenoon, looking forth of my lattice, I saw him walking along the riverside, his arm cast about Will's neck; and 'twas a dearer sight to my soul than to see the king walking there with his arms around Father's neck. They seemed in such earnest converse, that I was avised to ask Will, afterwards, what they had been saying. He told me that, after much friendly chat together on this and that, Father fell into a muse, and presently, fetching a deep sigh, says,—

"Would to God, son Roper, on condition three things were well established in Christendom, I were put into a sack, and cast presently into the Thames."

Will saith,—"What three so great things can they be, Father, as to move you to such a wish?"

"In faith, Will," answers he, "they be these.—First, that whereas the most part of Christian princes be at war, they were at universal peace. Next, that whereas the Church of Christ is at present sore afflicted with divers errors and heresies, it were settled in a godly uniformity. Last, that this matter of the King's marriage were, to the glory of God and the quietness of all parties, brought to a good conclusion."

Indeed, this last matter preys on my Father's soul. He hath even knelt to the king, to refrain from exacting compliance with his Grace's will concerning it; movingly reminding him, even with tears, of his Grace's own words to him on delivering the great seal, "First look unto God, and, after God, unto me." But the king is heady in this matter; stubborn as a mule or wild ass's colt, whose mouths must be held with bit and bridle if they are to be governed at all; and the king hath taken the bit between his teeth, and there is none dare ride him. All for love of a brown girl, with a wen on her throat and an extra finger.

July 18*th.*

How short a time ago it seemeth, that in my prosperity I said, "We shall never be moved; Thou,

Lord, of Thy goodness hast made our hill so strong! . . . Thou didst turn away Thy face and I was troubled!"

28*th.*

Thus saith Plato of Him whom he sought but hardly found: "Truth is his body and light his shadow." A marvellous saying for a heathen.

Hear also what St. John saith: "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. And the Light was the life of men and the light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."

Hear also what St. Augustine saith: "They are the most uncharitable towards error who have never experienced how hard a matter it is to come at the truth."

Hard, indeed. Here's Father against Will and against Erasmus, of whom he once could not speak well enough; and now he says that if he upholds such and such opinions his dear Erasmus may be the devil's Erasmus for what he cares. And here's Father at issue with half the learned heads in Christendom concerning the king's marriage. And yet, for all that, I think Father in the right.

He taketh matters so to heart that even his appetite fails. Yesterday he put aside his favourite dish of

brewis, saying, "I know not how 'tis, good Alice; I have lost my stomach, I think, for my old relishes" . . . and this, even with a tear in his eye. But 'twas not the brewis, I know, that made it start.

August.

He hath resigned the great seal! And none of us knew of his having done so, nor even of his meditating it, till after morning prayers to-day, when, instead of one of his gentlemen stepping up to my Mother in her pew with the words, "Madam, my Lord is gone," he cometh up to her himself, with a smile on his face and saith, long bowing as he spoke, "Madam, my Lord is gone." She takes it for one of the many jests whereof she misses the point; and 'tis not till we are out of church, in the open air, that she fully comprehends my Lord Chancellor is indeed gone, and she hath only her Sir Thomas More.

A burst of tears was no more than was to be looked for from poor Mother; and, in sooth, we all felt aggrieved and mortified enough; but 'twas a short sorrow; for Father declared that he had cast Pelion and Ossa off his back into the bottomless pit, and fell into such funny antics that we were soon as merry as ever we were in our lives. Patteson, so soon as he

hears it, comes leaping and skipping across the garden, crying, "A fatted calf! let a fatted calf be killed, Masters and Mistresses, for this my brother who was dead is alive again!" and falls a kissing his hand. But poor Patteson's note will soon change, for Father's diminished state will necessitate the dismissal of all extra hands; and there is many a servant under his roof whom he can worse spare than the poor fool.

In the evening he gathers us all about in the pavilion, where he throws himself in his old accustomed seat, casts his arms about Mother and cries, "How glad must Cincinnatus have been to spy out his cottage again, with Racilia standing at the gate!" Then, called for curds and cream; said how sweet the soft summer air was coming over the river and bade Cecil sing "The King's hunt's up." After this, one ballad after another was called for, till all had sung their lay, ill or well, he listing the while with closed eyes and a composed smile about his mouth; the two furrows between his brows relaxing gradually till at length they could no more be seen. At last he says,—

"Who was that old Prophet that could not or would not prophesy for a king of Judah till a minstrel came and played unto him? Sure, he must have loved, as I do, the very lovely song of one that playeth

well upon an instrument, the human heart ; and have felt, as I do now, the spirit given him to speak of matters foreign to his mind. 'Tis of *res angusta domi*, dear brats, I must speak ; so, the sooner begun, the sooner over. Here am I, with a dear wife and eight loved children . . . for my daughters' husbands and my son's wife are my children as much as any ; and Mercy Giggs is a daughter too . . . nine children, then, and eleven grandchildren, and a swarm of servants, to boot, all of whom have as yet eaten what it pleased them, and drunk what it suited them at my board, without its being any one's business to say them nay. 'Twas the dearest privilege of my Lord Chancellor ; but now he's dead and gone, how shall we contract the charges of Sir Thomas More?"

We looked from one to another and were silent.

"I'll tell ye, dear ones," he went on. "I have been brought up at Oxford, at an inn of Chancery, at Lincoln's inn, and at the King's Court ; from the lowest degree, that is, to the highest ; and yet have I in yearly revenues at this present, little above one hundred pounds a-year ; but then, as Chilo saith, 'honest loss is preferable to dishonest gain : by the first, a man suffers once ; by the second, for ever ;' and I may take up my parable with Samuel, and say ; 'Whose ox have I taken ? whose ass have I taken ?

whom have I defrauded ? whom have I oppressed ? of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith ?' No, my worst enemies cannot lay to my charge any of these things ; and my trust in you is, that, rather than regret I should not have made a purse by any such base methods, you will all cheerfully contribute your proportions to the common fund, and share alike with me in this my diminished state."

We all got about him and by our words and kisses gave warrant that we would.

"Well, then," quoth he, "my mind is, that since we are of a will to walk down-hill together, we will do so at a breathing pace and not drop down like a plummet. Let all things be done decently and in order : we won't descend to Oxford fare first, nor yet to the fare of New Inn. We'll begin with Lincoln's Inn diet, whereon many good and wise men thrive well ; if we find this draw too heavily on the common-purse, we will, next year, come down to Oxford fare, with which many great and learned Doctors have been conversant ; and, if our purse stretch not to cover even this, why, in Heaven's name, we'll go begging together, with staff and wallet, and sing a *Salve Regina* at every good man's door, whereby we shall still keep company, and be merry together !"

Now that the first surprise and grief, and the first fervour of fidelity and self-devotion have passed off, we have subsided into how deep and holy a quiet!

We read of the desertion of the world, as a matter of course; but, when our own turn comes, it does seem strange, to find ourselves let fall down the stream without a single hand outstretched to help us; forgotten in a moment, as though we had never been, by those who lately ate and laughed at our table. And this, without any fault or offence of ours, but merely from our having lost the light of the king's countenance. I say, it does seem strange; but how fortunate, how blessed are those to whom such a course of events *only* seems strange, unaccompanied by self-reproach and bitterness! I could not help feeling this, in reading an affectionate letter dear Father writ this forenoon to Erasmus, wherein he said, "I have now obtained what, from a child, I have continually wished! that, being entirely quit of business and all public affairs, I might live for a time only to God and myself."

Having no hankering after the old round he so long hath run, he now, in fact, looks younger every day; and yet, not with the same kind of youth he had before his back was bowed under the Chancellor-

ship. 'Tis a more composed, chastised sort of rejuvenescence: rather the soft warmth of autumn, which sometimes seems like May, than May itself: the enkindling, within this mortal tabernacle, of a heavenly light that never grows dim, because it is immortal, and burns the same yesterday, to-day and for ever: a youthfulness of soul and mind characterised by growth, something with which this world and its fleeting fancies has nothing to do, something that the king can neither impart nor take away.

. . . We have had a tearful morning . . . poor Patteson has gone. My Father hath obtained good quarters for him with my Lord Mayor, with a stipulation that he shall retain his office with the Lord Mayor for the time being, as long as he can fill it at all. This suits Patteson, who says he will sooner shift masters year by year, than grow too fond of any man again as he hath of Father; but there has been sad blubbering and blowing of noses.

September 24th.

This afternoon, coming upon Mercy seated in the alcove, like unto the image of some saint in a niche, her hands folded on her lap and her eyes steadfastly agaze on the setting sun, I could not but mark how

years were silently at work upon her, as doubtless upon us all; the tender, fearful girl having thus gradually changed into the sober, high-minded woman. She is so seldom seen in repose, so constantly astir and afoot in this or that kind office, mostly about the children, that I had never thought upon it before; but now I was all at once avised to marvel that she who had so long seemed fitter for heaven than earth, should never literally have vowed herself the spouse of Christ; more in special as all expectation of being the spouse of any one else must long since have died within her.

I said, "Mercy, thou lookst like a nun: how is it thou hast never become one in earnest?"

She started, then said, "Could I be more useful? more harmless? less exposed to temptation? or half so happy as I am now? In sooth, Meg, the time has been when methought, how sweet the living death of the cloister! How good that must needs be which had the suffrages of Chrysostom the golden-mouthed, and holy Ambrose and our own Anselm! How peaceful, to take wing like the dove and fly from a naughty world and be at rest! How brave, to live alone like St. Antony in the desert! only I would have had some books with me in my cave and 'tis uncertain whether St Antony had knowledge of letters,

beyond the heaven-taught lesson, 'God is love,' . . . for methought so much reflection and no action would be too much for a woman's mind to bear—I might go mad, and I remembered me that the dove that gladly flew away from the ark gladly flew back and abode in the ark till such time as a new home was ready for her. And methought, cannot I live apart from sin here, and now ; and as to sorrow, where can we live apart from that ? Sure, we may live on the skirts of the world in a spirit as truly unworldly, as though we were altogether out of it : and here I may come and go, and range in the fresh air, and love other folk's children, and read over my Psalter, and pore over the sayings of the wise men of old, and look on the faces I love, and sit at the feet of Sir Thomas More. So there, Meg, are my poor reasons for not caring to be a nun. Our dear Lord is in Himself all that our highest, holiest affections can seek or comprehend, for He made these our hearts, He gave us these our affections, and through them the Spirit speaks. Aspiring to their source, they rise up like the white smoke and bright flame ; while, on earth, if left unmastered, they burn, suffocate and destroy. Yet they have their natural and innocent outlets here ; and a woman may warm herself by them without scorching, and yet be neither a wife nor a nun."

Ever since Father's speech to us in the pavilion, we have been of one heart and one soul ; neither have any of us said that aught of the things we possessed were our own, but we have had all things in common. And we have eaten our meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

This afternoon, expressing to Father my grateful sense of our present happiness . . . "Yes, Meg," returns he, "I too, am deeply thankful for this breathing space."

"Do you look on it as no more, then ?" I said.

"As no more, Meg : we shall have a thunder-clap by and by. Look out on the Thames. See how unwontedly clear it is and how low the swallows fly. . . . How distinctly we see the green sedges on Battersea bank and their reflected images in the water. We can almost discern the features of those poor knaves digging in the cabbage gardens and hear them talk, so still is the air. Have you never before noted these signs ?"

"A storm is brewing," I said.

"Ay, we shall have a lightning-flash anon. So still, Meg, is also our moral atmosphere just now. God is giving us a breathing space, as he did to the Egyptians before the plague of hail, that they might

gather their live stock within doors. Let us take for example them that believed and obeyed Him, and improve this holy pause."

Just at this moment, a few heavy drops fell against the window pane and were seen by both. Our eyes met, and I felt a silent pang.

"Five days before the Passover," resumed Father, "all seemed as still and quiet as we are now; but Jesus knew His hour was at hand. Even while He yet spoke familiarly among the people, there came a sound from heaven, and they that stood by said it thundered; but *He* knew it for the voice of His dear Father. Let us, in like manner, when the clap cometh, recognise in it the voice of God and not be afraid with any amazement."

November 2nd.

Gammer Gurney is dead, and I must say I am glad of it. The change to her, must be blessed, and there seemed some danger lest, after having escaped being ducked for a witch, she should have been burnt for a heretic. Father looked on her as an obstinate old woman; Will counted her little short of a saint and prophetess, and kept her well supplied with all she could need. Latterly she was stone deaf; so 'tis a happy release.

The settled purpose of Father's soul just now, is to make up a marriage between Mercy and Dr. Clement. 'Tis high advancement for her, and there seems to have been some old liking between them we never knew of.

1533, *April* 1.

Though some months have passed since my Father uttered his warning voice and all continues to go quiet, I cannot forbear, now and then, to call his monition to mind, and look about for the cloud that is to bring the thunderclap; but the expectation sobers rather than saddens me.

This morning, leaning over the river wall, I was startled by the cold, damp hand of some one from behind being laid on mine. At the same time a familiar voice exclaimed, "Canst tell us, Mistress, why fools have hot heads and hands icy cold?"

I made answer, "Canst tell me, Patteson, why fools should stray out of bounds."

"Why, that's what fools do every day," he readily replied; "but this is All Fools' Day, mine own especial holiday, and I told my Lord Mayor overnight, that if he looked for a fool this morning, he must look in the glass. In sooth, Mistress Meg, I should by rights wear the gold chain and he the motley;

for a proper fool he is, and I shall be glad when his year's service to me is out. The worst of these Lord Mayors is, that we can't part with them till their time's up.

"Why now, this present one hath not so much understanding as would foot an old stocking; 'twas but yesterday, when, in quality of my taster, he civilly enough makes over to me a half-eaten plate of gurnet, which I wave aside, thus saying, I eat no fish of which I cannot affirm, '*rari sunt boni*,' few are the bones . . . and I protest to you he knew it not for fool's Latin. Thus I'm driven, from mere discouragement, to leave prating for listening, which thou knowest, Mistress, is no fool's office; and among the sundry matters I hear at my Lord's table . . . for he minds not what he says before his servants, thereby giving new proof 'tis he should wear the motley . . . I note his saying that the King's private marriage will assuredly be made public this coming Easter, and my Lady Anne will be crowned . . . more by token, he knows the merchant that will supply the Genoa velvet and cloth of gold, and the maskers that are to enact the pageant. For the love of safety, then, Mistress Meg, bid thy good Father even take a fool's advice, and eat humble pie betides, for doubt not this proud Madam to be as vindictive as Herodias, and one that, unless he

appease her full early, will have this head set before her in a charger. I've said my say."

April 4th.

Three Bishops have been here this forenoon, to bid Father to the Coronation and offer him twenty pounds to provide his dress ; but Father hath, with courtesy, declined to be present. After much friendly pressing, they parted, seemingly on good terms ; but I have misgivings of the issue.

April 9th.

A ridiculous charge has been got up against dear Father, no less than of bribery and corruption. One Parnell complaineth of a decree given against him in favour of one Vaughan, whose wife, he deponeth, gave Father a gilt flagon. To the no small surprise of the Council, Father admitted that she had done so : "But, my Lords," proceeded he, when they had uttered a few sentences of reprehension somewhat too exultantly, "will ye list the conclusion of the tale ? I bade my butler fill the cup with wine, and having drunk her health, I made her pledge me and then restored her gift and would not take it again."

As innocent a matter, touching the offering him

a pair of gloves containing forty pounds, and his taking the first and returning the last, saying he preferred his gloves without lining, hath been made public with like triumph to his own good fame ; but alack ! these feathers show which way sets the wind.

April 13th.

A heavier charge than either of the above hath been got up, concerning the wicked woman of Kent, with whom they accuse him of having tampered, that, in her pretended revelations and rhapsodies, she might utter words against the king's divorce. His name hath, indeed, been put in the bill of attainder ; but, out of favour, he hath been granted a private hearing, his judges being the new Archbishop, the new Chancellor, his Grace of Norfolk and Master Cromwell.

He tells us that they stuck not to the matter in hand, but began cunningly enough to sound him on the King's matters ; and finding they could not shake him, did proceed to threats, which, he told them, might well enough scare children, but not him ; and as to his having provoked his Grace the King to set forth in his book aught to dishonour and fetter a good Christian, his Grace himself well knew the book was never shown him save for verbal criticism when

the subject-matter was completed by the Maker of the same, and that he had warned his Grace not to express so much submission to the Pope. Whereupon they with great displeasure dismissed him, and he took boat for Chelsea with mine husband in such gay spirits, that Will, not having been privy to what had passed, concluded his name to have been struck out of the bill of attainder and congratulated him thereupon so soon as they came aland, saying, "I guess, Father, all is well, seeing you thus merry."

"It is, indeed, son Roper" returns Father steadily; repeating thereupon, once or twice, this phrase, "All is well."

Will, somehow mistrusting him, puts the matter to him again.

"You are then, Father, put out of the bill?"

"Out of the bill, good fellow?" repeats Father, stopping short in his walk and regarding him with a smile that Will saith was like to break his heart. . . .

"Wouldst thou know, dear son, why I am so joyful? In good faith, I have given the devil a foul fall; for I have with these Lords gone so far, as that without great shame I can never go back. The first step, Will, is the worst and that's taken."

And so, to the house, with never another word, Will being smote at the heart.

But, this forenoon, dear Will comes running in to me, with joy all bright, and tells me that he hath just heard from Cromwell that Father's name is in sooth struck out. Thereupon, we go together to him with the news. He taketh it thankfully, yet composedly, saying, as he lays his hand on my shoulder, "In faith, Meg, *quod differtur non aufertur*." Seeing me somewhat stricken and overborn, he saith, "Come, let's leave good Will awhile to the company of his own select and profitable thoughts, and take a turn together by the water side."

Then, closing his book, which I marked was Plato's Phaedon, he steps forth with me into the garden, leaning on my shoulder and pretty heavily too. After a turn or two in silence, he lightens his pressure and in a bland, peaceifying tone commences Horace's tenth ode, book second, and goes through the first fourteen or fifteen lines in a kind of lulling monotone; then takes another turn or two, ever looking at the Thames; and in a stronger voice begins his favourite

"*Justum ac tenacem propositi virum*
Non civium ardor," *etc*

on to

"*Impavidum ferient ruinae*;"

—and lets go his hold on me to extend his hand in

fine, free action. Then, drawing me to him again, presently murmurs, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. . . ." Oh no, not worthy to be compared. I have lived ; I have laboured ; I have loved. I have lived in them I loved ; laboured for them I loved ; loved them for whom I laboured ; my labour has not been in vain. To love and to labour is the sum of living, and yet how many think they live who neither labour nor love ! Again, how many labour and love, and yet are not loved ; but I have been loved, and my labour has not been in vain. Now, the day is far spent and the night is at hand, and the time draweth nigh when man resteth from his labours, even from his labours of love ; but still he shall love and he shall live where the Spirit saith he shall rest from his labours, and where his works do follow him, for he entereth into rest through and to Him who is Life, and Light, and Love."

Then, looking steadily at the Thames, "How quietly," saith he, "it flows on ! This river, Meg, hath its origin from seven petty springs somewhither amongst the Gloucestershire hills, where they bubble forth unnoted save by the herd and kine. Belike, they murmur over the pebbles prettily enough ; but a

great river, mark you, never murmurs. It murmured and babbled too, 'tis like, whilst only a brook, and brawled away as it widened and deepened and chafed against obstacles, and here and there got a fall, and splashed and made much ado, but ever kept running on towards its end, still deepening and widening; and now towards the close of its course look you how swift and quiet it is, running mostly between flats, and with the dear blue heaven reflected in its face."

1534, *April* 12.

'Twas on Wednesday was a week, we were quietly taking our dinner, when, after a loud and violent knocking at the outer door, in cometh a pursuivant and summoneth Father to appear next day before the commissioners, to take the newly-coined oath of supremacy. Mother utters a hasty cry, Bess turns white as death, but I, urged by I know not what sudden impulse to con the new comer's visage narrowly, did with eagerness exclaim, "Here's some jest of Father's; 'tis only Dick Halliwell!"

Whereupon, Father burst out a-laughing, hugged Mother, called Bess a silly puss and gave Halliwell a groat for his pains. Now, while some were laughing, and others taking Father pretty sharply

to task for so rough a crank, I fell a musing, what could be the drift of this, and could only surmise it might be to harden us beforehand, as it were, to what was sure to come at last. And the pre-apprehension of this so belaboured my already over-burthened spirits, as that I was fain to betake myself to the nursery, and lose all thought and reflection in my little Bess's pretty ways. And, this not answering, was forced to have recourse to prayer; then, leaving my closet, was able to return to the nursery and forget myself awhile in the mirth of the infants.

Hearing voices beneath the lattice, I looked forth and beheld his Grace of Norfolk (of late a strange guest) walking beneath the window in earnest converse with Father; and, as they turned about, I heard him say, "By the Mass, Master More, 'tis perilous striving with princes. I could wish you, as a friend, to incline to the king's pleasure, for *indignatio principis mors est.*"

"Is that all?" says Father; "why then there will be only this difference between your Grace and me, that I shall die to-day and you to-morrow;"—which was the sum of what I caught.

Next morning we were breaking our fast with peacefulness of heart, on the principle that sufficient

for the day is the evil thereof, and there had been a wordy war between our two factions of the Neri and Bianchi, Bess having defalked from the mancheteers on the ground that black bread sweetened the breath and settled the teeth, to the no small triumph of the cob loaf party; while Daisy, persevering at her crusts, said, "No, I can cleave to the rye bread as steadily as any among you, but 'tis vain of Father to maintain that it is as toothsome as a manchet or that I eat it to whiten my teeth, for thereby he robs self-denial of its grace."

Father, strange to say, seemed taken at vantage, and was pausing for a retort, when Hobson coming in and whispering somewhat in his ear, he rose suddenly and went forth of the hall with him, putting his head back again to say, "Rest ye all awhile where ye be," which we did, uneasily enough. Anon he returns, brushing his cap and says calmly, "Now, let's forth to Church," and clips Mother's arm beneath his own and leads the way. We follow as soon as we can; and I, listing to him more than to the priest, did think I never heard him make response more composedly, nor sing more lustily, by the which I found myself in stouter heart. After prayers, he is shriven, after which he saunters back with us to the house; then,

briskly turning on his heel, cries to my husband, "Now, Will, let's toward, lad," and claps the wicket after him, leaving us at the other side without so much as casting back a parting look. Though he evermore had been avised to let us accompany him to the boat and there kiss him once and again or ever he went, I know not that I should have thought much of this, had not Daisy, looking after him keenly, exclaimed somewhat shortly as she turned in doors, "I wish I had not uttered that quip about the cob-loaf."

Oh, how heavily sped the day! The house, too big now for its Master's diminished retinue, had never yet hitherto seemed lonesome; but now a somewhat of dreary and dreadful, inexpressible in words, invisible to the eyes, but apprehended by the inner sense, filled the blank space all about. For the first time every one seemed idle; not only disinclined for business, but as though there were something unseemly in addressing one's self to it. There was nothing to cry about, nothing to talk over and yet we all stood agaze at each other in groups, like the cattle under the trees, when a storm is at hand. Mercy was the first to start off. I held her back and said, "What is to do?" She whispered, "Pray." I let her arm drop, but

Bess at that instant comes up with cheeks as colourless as parchment. She saith, "'Tis made out now. A pursuivant *de facto* fetched him forth this morning." We gave one deep, universal sigh; Mercy broke away, and I after her, to seek the same remedy, but alas, in vain. . . .

15*th*.

How large a debt we owe you, wise and holy men of old! How ye counsel us to patience, incite us to self-mastery, cheer us on to high emprize, temper us in the heat of youth, school our inexperience, calm the o'erwrought mind, allay the anguish of disappointment, cheat suspense and master despair. . . . How much better and happier ye would make us, if we would but list your teaching!

Bess hath fallen sick; no marvel. Every one goeth heavily. All joy is darkened, the mirth of the house is gone. Will tells me, that as they pushed off from the stairs, Father took him about the neck and whispered, "I thank our Lord, the field is won!" Sure, Regulus never went forth with higher self-devotion.

Having declared his inability to take the oath as it stood, they bade him, Will tells me, take a

turn in the garden while they administered it to sundry others, thus affording him leisure for re-consideration. But they might as well have bidden the neap-tide turn before its hour. When called in again, he was as firm as ever, so was given in ward to the Abbot of Westminster till the King's Grace was informed of the matter. And now, the fool's wise saying of vindictive Herodias came true, for 'twas the King's mind to have mercy on his old servant and tender him a qualified oath ; but Queen Anne, by her importunate clamours, did overrule his proper will, and at four days' end, the full oath being again tendered and rejected, Father was committed to the Tower. Oh, wicked woman, how could you ? . . . Sure, you never loved a Father. . . .

22nd.

In answer to incessant applications throughout this last month past, Mother hath at length obtained access to dear Father. She returned, her eyes nigh swollen to closing with weeping. . . . We crowded round about, burning for her report, but 'twas some time ere she could fetch breath or heart to give it us. At length Daisy, kissing her hand once and again, draws forth a disjointed tale, somewhat after this fashion.

"Come, give over weeping, dearest Mother, 'twill do neither him, you nor us any good. . . . What was your first speech of him?"

"Oh, my first speech, sweetheart, was, 'What, my goodness, Mr. More! I marvel how that you, who were always counted a wise man, should now so play the fool as to lie here in this close, filthy prison, shut up with mice and rats, when you might be abroad and at your liberty, with the favour of King and Council, and return to your right fair house, your books and gallery, and your wife, children and household, if so be you only would but do what the bishops and best learned of the realm have, without scruple, done already.'"

"And what said he, Mother, to that?"

"Why, then, sweetheart, he chucks me under the chin and saith, 'I prithee, good Mistress Alice, to tell me one thing.' . . . So then I say, 'What thing?' So then he saith, 'Is not this house, sweetheart, as nigh heaven as mine own?' So then I jerk my head away and say, 'Tilly-valley! tilly-valley!'"

Saith Bess, "Sure, Mother, that was cold comfort. . . . And what next?"

"Why, then I said, '*Bone Deus*, Man! *Bone Deus!* will this gear never be left?' So then he saith,

'Well then, Mrs. Alice, if it be so, 'tis mighty well, but, for my part, I see no great reason why I should much joy in my gay house or in anything belonging thereunto, when, if I should be but seven years buried underground, and then arise and come thither again, I should not fail to find some therein that would bid me get out of doors, and tell me 'twas none of mine. What cause have I, then, to care so greatly for a house that would so soon forget its Master?'"

"And then, Mother, and then?" "So then, sweetheart, he saith, 'Come tell me, Mrs. Alice, how long do you think we might reckon on living to enjoy it?' So I say, 'Some twenty years, forsooth.' 'In faith,' says he, 'had you said some thousand years, it had been somewhat; and yet he were a very bad merchant that would put himself in danger to lose eternity for a thousand years . . . how much the rather if we are not sure to enjoy it one day to an end?' So then he puts me off with questions, How is Will? and Daisy? and Rupert? and this one? and the other one? and the peacocks? and rabbits? and have we elected a new king of the cob-loaf yet? and has Tom found his hoop? and is the hasp of the buttery-hatch mended yet? and how goes the

Court? and what was the text on Sunday? and have I practised the viol? and how we are off for money? and why can't he see Meg? Then he asks for this book and the other book, but I forgot their names, and he saith he is kept mighty short of meat, though 'tis little he eats, but his man John a Wood is gay and hungry, and 'tis worth a world to see him at a salt herring. Then he gives me counsel of this and that, and puts his arm about me and says, 'Come, let us pray;' but while he kept praying for one and the other, I kept a-counting of his grey hairs; he'd none a month ago. And we were scarce off our knees, when I'm fetched away; and I say, 'When will you change your note and act like a wise man?' and he saith, 'When? when?' looking very profound; 'why, . . . when gorse is out of blossom and kissing out of fashion.' So puts me forth by the shoulders with a laugh, calling after me, 'Remember me over and over again to them all, and let me see Meg.'"

. . . I feel as if a string were tied tight about my heart. Methinketh 'twill burst if we go on long so.

July 25th.

He hath writ us a few lines with a coal, ending with "*Sursum corda*, dear children! up with your hearts." The bearer was dear Bonvisi.

August 16th.

The Lord begins to cut us short. We are now on very meagre commons, dear Mother being obliged to pay fifteen shillings a week for the board, poor as it is, of Father and his servant. She hath parted with her velvet gown, embroidered overthwart, to my Lady Sands' woman. Her mantle edged with coney went long ago.

But we lose not heart; I think mine is becoming annealed in the furnace and will not now break. I have writ somewhat after this fashion to him. . . . "What do you think, most dear Father, doth comfort us at Chelsea, during this your absence? Surely, the remembrance of your manner of life among us, your holy conversation, your wholesome counsels, your examples of virtue, of which there is hope that they do not only persevere with you, but that, by God's grace, they are much increased."

I weary to see him. . . . Yes, we shall meet in heaven, but how long first, O Lord? how long?

August 20th.

Now that I've come back, let me seek to think, to remember. . . . Sure, my head will clear by-and-by ! Strange, that feeling should have the masterdom of thought and memory, in matters it is most concerned to retain.

. . . I minded to put the haircloth and cord under my farthingale, and one or two of the smaller books in my pouch, as also some sweets and suckets such as he was used to love. Will and Bonvisi were a-waiting for me ; and dear Bess, putting forth her head from her chamber door, cries piteously, "Tell him, dear Meg, tell him . . . 'twas never so sad for me to be sick . . . and that I hope . . . I pray . . . the time may come . . . " then falls back swooning into Dancey's arms, whom I leave crying heartily over her and hasten below to receive the confused medley of messages sent by every other member of the house. For mine own part, I was in such a tremulous succussion as to be scarce fit to stand or go ; but time and the tide will no man bide, and, once having taken boat, the cool river air allayed my fevered spirits ; only I could not for awhile get rid of the impression of poor Dancey crying over Bess in her delirium.

I think none of the three opened our lips before we reached Lambeth, save, in the reach, Will cried to

the steersman, "Look you run us not aground," in a sharper voice than I ever heard from him. After passing the Archbishop's palace, whereon I gazed full ruefully, good Bonvisi began to mention some rhymes he had found writ with a diamond on one of the window-panes at Crosby House, and would know were they Father's? and was it the chamber Father had used to sleep in? I told him it was, but knew nought of the distich, though 'twas like enough to be his. And thence he went on to this and that, how that Father's cheerful, funny humour never forsook him, nor his brave heart never quelled; instancing his fearless passage through the traitor's gate, asking his neighbours whether *his* gait were that of a traditor; and, on being sued by the porter for his upper garment, giving him his cap, which he said was uppermost. And other such quips and passages, which I scarce noted nor smiled at, so sorry was I of cheer.

At length we stayed rowing: Will lifted me out, kissed me, heartened me up; and, indeed, I was in better heart then, having been quietly in prayer a good while. After some few forms, we were led through sundry turns and passages; and, or ever I was aware, I found myself quit of my companions and in Father's arms.

We both cried a little at first; I wonder I wept no more, but strength was given me in that hour. As soon as I could, I looked him in the face and he looked at me, and I was beginning to note his hollow cheeks, when he said, "Why, Meg you are getting freckled;" so that made us both laugh. He said, "You should get some freckle-water of the Lady that sent me here; depend on it, she hath washes and tinctures in plenty; and after all, Meg, she'll come to the same end at last, and be as the lady all bone and skin, whose ghastly legend used to scare thee so when thou wert a child. Don't tell that story to thy children; 'twill hamper them with unsavoury images of death. Tell them of heavenly hosts awaiting to carry off good men's souls in fire-bright chariots, with horses of the sun, to a land where they shall never more be surbated and weary, but walk on cool, springy turf and among myrtle trees, and eat fruits that shall heal while they delight them, and drink the coldest of cold water, fresh from the river of life, and have space to stretch themselves, and bathe, and leap, and run, and, whichever way they look, meet Christ's eyes smiling on them. Sure, Meg, who would live, that could die? One might as lief be an Angel shut up in a nutshell as abide here. Fancy how gladsome the sweet spirit would be to have the shell cracked! no

matter by whom ; the king, or king's mistress . . . Let her dainty foot but set him free, he'd say, 'For this release, much thanks' . . . And how goes the Court, Meg ?"

"In faith, Father, never better. . . . There is nothing else there, I hear, but dancing and disporting."

"Never better, child, sayst thou ? Alas, Meg, it pitieth me to consider what misery, poor soul, she will shortly come to. These dances of hers will prove such dances that she will spurn our heads off like footballs ; but 'twill not be long ere her head will dance the like dance. Mark you, Meg, a man that restraineth not his passions, hath always something cruel in his nature, and if there be a woman toward, she is sure to suffer heaviest for it, first or last. . . . Seek Scripture precedent for it . . . you'll find it as I say. Stony as death, cruel as the grave. Those Pharisees that were, to a man, convicted of sin, yet haled a sinning woman before the Lord, and would fain have seen the dogs lick up her blood. When they lick up mine, dear Meg, let not your heart be troubled, even though they should hale thee to London Bridge, to see my head stuck on a pole. Think, most dearest, I shall then have more reason to weep for thee than thou for me. But there's no weeping in heaven ; and bear in mind, Meg, distinctly, that if

they send me thither, 'twill be for obeying the law of God rather than of men. And after all, we live not in the bloody, barbarous old times of crucifyings and flayings, and immersing in cauldrons of boiling oil. One stroke, and the affair's done. A clumsy chirurgeon would be longer extracting a tooth. We have oft agreed that the little birds struck down by the kite and hawk suffer less than if they were reserved to a natural death. There is one sensible difference, indeed, between us. In our cases, preparation is a-wanting."

Hereon, I minded me to slip off the haircloth and rope, and give the same to him, along with the books and suckets, all which he hid away privately, making merry at the last.

"'Twould tell well before the Council," quoth he, "that on searching the prison-cell of Sir Thomas More, there was found flagitiously and mysteriously laid up . . . a piece of barley-sugar!"

Then we talked over sundry home-matters; and anon, having now both of us attained unto an equable and chastened serenity of mind, which needed not any false shows of mirth to hide the natural complexion of, he saith, "I believe, Meg, they that have put me here ween they have done me a high displeasure; but I assure thee on my faith, mine own good

daughter, that if it had not been for my wife, and for you, my dear good children, I would fain have been closed up, long ere this, in as strait a room, and straiter too."

Thereon, he showed me how illegal was his imprisonment, there being no statute to authorize the imposition of the oath, and he delivered himself, with some displeasure, against the king's ill counsellors.

"And surely, Meg," quoth he, "'tis pity that any Christian prince should, by a flexible council ready to follow his affections, and by a weak clergy lacking grace to stand constantly to the truth as they have learned it, be with flattery so constantly abused. The lotus fruit fabled by the ancients, which made them that ate it lose all relish for the daily bread of their own homes, was flattery, Meg, as I take it and nothing else. And what less was the song of the syrens, against which Ulysses made his sailors stop their ears, and which he, with all his wisdom, could not listen to without struggling to be unbound from the mast? Even praise, Meg, which, moderately given, may animate and cheer forward the noblest minds, yet too lavishly bestowed, will decrease and palsy their strength, even as an overdose of the most generous and sprightly medicine may prove mortiferous. But flattery is no medicine, but a rank poison, which

hath slain kings, yea and mighty kings; and they who love it, the Lord knoweth afar off; knoweth distantly, has no care to know intimately, for they are none of his."

Thus we went on, from one theme to another, till methinketh a heavenly light seemed to shine all about us, like as when the angel entered the prison of Peter. I hung upon every word and thought that issued from his lips, and drank them in as thirsty land sucks up the tender rain. . . . Had the angel of death at that hour come in to fetch both of us, I would not have said him nay, I was so passively, so intensely happy. At length, as time wore on, and I knew I should soon be fetched forth, I could not but wish I had the clew to some secret passage or subterraneal, of the which there were doubtless plenty in the thick walls, whereby we might steal off together. Father made answer, "Wishes never filled a sack. I make it my business, Meg, to wish as little as I can, except that I were better and wiser. You fancy these four walls lonesome; how oft, dost thou suppose, I here receive Plato and Socrates, and this and that holy saint and martyr? My gaolers can no more keep them out than they can exclude the sunbeams. Thou knowest, Jesus stood among His

disciples when the doors were shut. I am not more lonely than St. Anthony in his cave, and I have a divine light even here, whereby to con the lesson, 'God is love.' The futility of our enemies' efforts to make us miserable was never more strongly proven to me than when I was a mere boy in Cardinal Morton's service. Having unwittingly angered one of his chaplains, a choleric and even malignant-spirited man, he did, of his own authority, shut me up for some hours in a certain damp vault, which, to a lad afraid of ghosts and devilish apparitions, would have been fearsome enough. Howbeit, I there cast myself on the ground with my back set against the wall, and mine arm behind my head, this fashion . . . and did then and there, by reason of a young heart, quiet conscience, and quick fancy, conjure up such a lively picture of the Queen of the Fairies' Court, and all the sayings and doings therein, that never was I more sorry than when my gaoler let me go free, and bade me rise up and be doing. In place, therefore, my daughter, of thinking of me in thy night watches as beating my wings against my cage bars, trust that God comes to look in upon me without knocking or bell-ringing. Often in spirit I am with you all; in the chapel, in the hall, in the

garden ; now in the hayfield, with my head on thy lap, now on the river, with Will and Rupert at the oar. You see me not about your path, you won't see my disembodied spirit beside you hereafter, but it may be close upon you once and again for all that : maybe, at times when you have prayed with most passion or suffered with most patience, or performed my hests with most exactness, or remembered my care of you with most affection. And now, good speed, good Meg, I hear the key turn in the door. . . . This kiss for thy Mother, this for Bess, this for Cecil, . . . this and this for my whole school. Keep dry eyes and a hopeful heart ; and reflect that nought but unpardoned sin should make us weep for ever."

September.

Seeing the woodman fell a noble tree, which, as it went to the ground, did uptear several small plants by the roots, methought such would be the fall of dear Father, herein more sad than that of the Abbot of Sion and the Charterhouse monks, inasmuch as, being celibate, they involve no others in their ruin. Brave, holy martyrs ! how cheerfully they went to their death. I'm glad to have

seen how pious men may turn even an ignominious sentence into a kind of euthanasy. Dear Father bade me note how they bore themselves as bridegrooms going to their marriage, and converted what might have been a shock to my surcharged spirits, into a lesson of deep and high comfort.

One thing hath grieved me sorely. He mistook somewhat I said at parting for an implication of my wish that he should yield up his conscience. Oh no, dearest Father, that be far from me! It seems to have cut him to the heart, for he hath writ that "none of the terrible things that may befall him touch him so nearly as that his dearly beloved child, whose opinion he so much values, should desire him to overrule his conscience." That be far from me, Father! I have writ to explain this matter, but his reproach, undeserved though it be, hath troubled my heart.

November.

Parliament will meet to-morrow. 'Tis expected Father and the good bishop of Rochester will be attainted for misprision of treason by the slavish members thereof; and though not given hitherto unto much heed of omens and bodements while our hearts were light and our courage high, yet now the

coming evil seemeth foreshadowed unto all by I know not how many melancholic presages, sent, for aught we know, in mercy. Now that the days are dark and short, and the nights stormy, we shun to linger much after dusk in lone chambers and passages, and what was said of the enemies of Israel may be nigh said of us, "that a falling leaf shall chase them." I'm sure, "a going in the tops of the mulberry trees" on a blusterous evening, is enough to draw us all, men, mothers and maids, together in a heap. . . . We go about the house in twos and threes, and care not much to leave the fireside. Last Sunday we had closed about the hearth, and little Bill was reading by the fire-light how Herodias' daughter danced off the head of St. John the Baptist, when down comes an empty swallow's nest tumbling down the chimney, bringing with it enough of soot, smoke and rubbish to half smother us all; but the dust was nothing to the dismay thereby occasioned, and I noted one or two of our bravest turn as pale as death. Then, the rats have skirmished and galloped behind the wainscoat more like a troop of horse than a herd of such small deer, to the infinite annoyance of Mother, who could not be more firmly persuaded they were about to leave a falling house, if, like the scarest priests in the Temple of Jerusalem, she had heard a voice utter,

"Let us depart hence." The round upper half of the cob-loaf rolled off the table this morning; and Rupert, as he picked it up, gave a kind of shudder, and muttered somewhat about a head rolling from the scaffold. Worse than this was on Tuesday night. . . . 'Twas bed-time, and yet none were liking to go, when of a sudden, we heard a screech that made everybody's heart thrill, followed by one or two hollow groans. Will snatches up the lamp and runs forth, I close following, and all the others at our heels; and after looking into sundry deserted cup-boards and corners, we descend the broad stone steps of the cellars, half way down which Will, stumbling over something he sees not, takes a flying leap to clear himself down to the bottom, luckily without extinguishing the lamp. We find Gillian on the steps in a swoon; on bringing her to, she exclaims about a ghost without a head, wrapped in a winding-sheet, that confronted her and then sank to the ground as she entered the vaults. We cast a fearful look about, and descry a tall white sack of flour, recently overturned by the rats, which clears up the mystery, and procures Gillian a little jeering; but we all returned to the hall with fluttered spirits. Another time, I, going up to the nursery in the dark, on hearing baby cry, am passed on the stairs by I know not what, breathing heavily. I reach forth

my arm, but pass clear through the spiritual nature, whatever it is, yet distinctly feel my cheek and neck fanned by its breath. I turn very faint, and get nurse to go with me when I return, bearing a light yet think it as well to say nought to distress the rest.

But worst of all was last night. . . . After I had been in bed awhile, I minded me that dear Will had not returned me Father's letter. I awoke him and asked if he had brought it upstairs ; he sleepily replied he had not, so I hastily arose, threw on a cloak, took a light and entered the gallery ; when, half-way along it, between me and the pale moon-shine, I was scared to behold a slender figure all in white, with naked feet and arms extended. I stood agaze, speechless, and to my terror made out the features of Bess . . . her eyes open, but vacant ; then saw John Dancey softly stealing after her, and signing to me with his finger on his lips. She passed without noting me, on to Father's door, there knelt as if in prayer, making a low sort of wail, while Dancey with tears running down his cheeks, whispered, "'Tis the third time of her thus sleep-walking . . . the token of how troubled a mind!" We disturbed her not, dreading that a sudden waking might bring on madness ; so after making moan awhile, she kisses the senseless door, rises up, moves towards her own chamber, followed

by Dancey and me, wrings her hands a little, then lies down and gradually falls into what seems a dreamless sleep, we watching her in silence till she's quiet, and then squeezing each other's hands ere we part.

— Will was wide awake when I got back ; he said, "Why, Meg, how long you have been ! could you not light on the letter ?" . . . When I told him what had hindered me by the way, he turned his face to the wall and wept.

Midnight.

The wild wind is abroad, and, methinketh, *nothing else*. Sure, how it rages through our empty courts ! In such a season, men, beasts and fowls cower beneath the shelter of their rocking walls, yet almost fear to trust them. Lord, I know Thou canst give the tempest double force, but do not, I beseech thee ! Oh ! have mercy on the frail dwelling and the ship at sea.

Dear little Bill hath taken a feverish attack. I watch beside him whilst his nurse sleeps. Early in the night his mind wandered and he told me of a pretty piebald poney, no bigger than a bee, that had golden housings and barley-sugar eyes ; then dozed, but ever and anon kept starting up, crying, "Mammy dear !" and softly murmured, "Oh !" when he saw I was by. At length I gave him my forefinger to hold,

which kept him aware of my presence without speaking ; but presently he stares hard towards the foot of the bed and says fearfully, "Mother, why hangs yon hatchet in the air, with its sharp edge turned towards us ?" I rise, move the lamp, and say, "Do you see it now ?" He saith, "No, not now," and closes his eyes. After a good space, during which I hoped he slept, he says in quite an altered tone, most like unto soft, sweet music, "There's a pretty little cherub there now, all head and no body, with two little wings aneath his chin ; but for all he's so pretty, he is just like dear Gaffer, and seems to know me . . . and he'll have a body again too, I believe, by and by. . . . Mother, Mother, tell Hobbinol there's such a gentle lamb in heaven !" And so, slept.

17th.

He's gone, my pretty. . . ! slipped through my fingers like a bird ! upfled to his own native skies ; and yet, whenas I think on him, I cannot choose but weep. . . . Such a guileless little lamb ! . . . My billy-bird ! his mother's own heart !—They are all wondrous kind to me. . . .

27th.

How strange that a little child should be permitted to suffer so much pain, when of such is the kingdom

of heaven ! But 'tis only transient, whereas a Mother makes it permanent, by thinking it over and over again. One lesson it taught us betimes, that a natural death is not, necessarily, the most easy. We must all die. . . . As poor Patteson was used to say, "The greatest king that ever was made, must bed at last with shovel and spade," . . . and I'd sooner have my Billy's baby deathbed than King Harry's, or Nan Boleyn's either, however many years they may carry matters with a high hand. Oh, you ministers of evil, whoever ye be, visible or invisible, you shall not build a wall between my God and me. . . . I've something within me grows stronger and stronger, as times grow more and more evil ; some would call it resolution, but methinketh 'tis faith.

Meantime, Father's foes . . . alack that any can show themselves such ! are aiming, by fair seemings of friendly conference, to draw from him admissions they can come at after no other fashion. The new Solicitor General hath gone to the Tower to deprive him of the few books I have taken him from time to time. . . . Ah, Master Rich, you must deprive him of his brains before you can rob him of their contents ! . . . and, while having them packed up, he falls into easy dialogue with him, as thus, . . . "Why now, sure, Mr. More, were there an act of

parliament made that all the realm should take me for king, you would take me for such with the rest."

"Aye, that would I, sir," returns Father.

"Forsooth then," pursues Rich, "we'll suppose another act that should make me the Pope. Would you not take me for Pope?"

"Or suppose another case, Mr. Rich," returns Father, "that another act should pass, that God should not be God, would you say well and good?"

"No, truly," returns the other hastily, for no parliament could make such act lawful."

"True, as you say," repeats Father, "they could not," . . . so eluded the net of the fowler; but how miserable and unhandsome a device to lay wait for him thus!

. . . I stole forth, ere 'twas light, this damp chill morning, to pray beside the little grave, but found dear Daisy there before me. How Christians love another!

Will's loss is as heavy as mine, yet he bears with me tenderly. Yesternight, he saith to me half reproachfully, "Am not I better unto thee than ten sons?"

March, 1535.

Spring comes, that brings rejuvenescence to the land, and joy to the heart, but it brings none to us,

for where hope dieth, joy dieth. But patience, soul; God's yet in the aumray!

May 7.

Father arraigned.

July 1.

By reason of Will's minding to be present at the trial, which, for the concourse of spectators, demanded his early attendance, he committed the care of me, with Bess to Dancy, who got us places to see Father on his way from the Tower to Westminster Hall. We could not come at him for the crowd, but clambered on a bench to gaze our very hearts away after him as he went by, sallow, thin, grey-haired, yet in mien not a whit cast down. Wrapped in a coarse woollen gown, and leaning on a staff; which unwonted support when Bess marked, she hid her eyes on my shoulder and wept sore, but soon looked up again, though her eyes were so blinded, I think she could not see him. His face was calm, but grave, as he came up, but just as he passed he caught the eye of some one in the crowd, and smiled in his old, frank way; then glanced up towards the windows with the bright look he hath so oft cast to me at my casement, but saw us not. I could not help crying, "Father," but he

heard me not ; perchance 'twas so best. . . . I would not have had his face cloud at the sight of poor Bessy's tears.

. . . Will tells me the indictment was the longest ever heard ; on four counts. First, his opinion on the king's marriage ; second, his writing sundry letters to the Bishop of Rochester, counselling him to hold out. Third, refusing to acknowledge his Grace's supremacy ; fourth, his positive denial of it, and thereby willing to deprive the king of his dignity and title.

When the reading of this was over, the Lord Chancellor saith, "Ye see how grievously you have offended the king his Grace, but and yet he is so merciful, as that if ye will lay aside your obstinacy, and change your opinion, we hope we may yet obtain pardon."

Father makes answer . . . and at sound of his dear voice all men hold their breaths ; . . . "Most noble Lords, I have great cause to thank your honours for this your courtesy . . . but I pray Almighty God I may continue in the mind I'm in, through His grace, until death."

They could not make good their accusations against him. 'Twas only on the last count he could be made out a traitor, and proof of it had they none ; how

could they have? He should have been acquitted out of hand, instead of which, his bitter enemy my Lord Chancellor called on him for his defence. Will saith there was a general murmur or sigh ran through the court. Father, however, answered the bidding by beginning to express his hope that the effect of long imprisonment might not have been such upon his mind and body, as to impair his power of rightly meeting all the charges against him . . . when, turning faint with long standing, he staggered and loosed hold of his staff, whereon he was accorded a seat. 'Twas but a moment's weakness of the body, and he then proceeded frankly to avow his having always opposed the king's marriage to his Grace himself, which he was so far from thinking high treason, that he should rather have deemed it treachery to have withholden his opinion from his Sovereign King when solicited by him for his counsel. His letters to the good Bishop he proved to have been harmless. Touching his declining to give his opinion when asked, concerning the supremacy, he alleged there could be no transgression in holding his peace thereon, God only being cognizant of our thoughts.

"Nay," interposeth the Attorney General, "your silence was the token of a malicious mind."

"I had always understood," answers Father, "that

silence stood for consent. '*Qui tacet, consentire videtur*;'" which made sundry smile. On the last charge, he protested he had never spoken word against the law unto any man.

The jury are about to acquit him, when up starts the Solicitor General, offers himself as witness for the crown, is sworn, and gives evidence of his dialogue with Father in the Tower, falsely adding, like a liar as he is, that on his saying, "No Parliament could make a law that God should not be God," Father had rejoined, "No more could they make the King supreme head of the Church."

I marvel the ground opened not at his feet. Father briskly made answer, "If I were a man, my Lords, who regarded not an oath, ye know well I needed not stand now at this bar. And if the oath which you, Mr. Rich, have just taken, be true, then I pray I may never see God in the face. In good truth, Mr. Rich, I am more sorry for your perjury than my peril. You and I once dwelt long together in one parish; your manner of life and conversation from your youth up were familiar to me, and it paineth me to tell ye were ever held very light of your tongue, a great dicer and gamester, and not of any commendable fame either there or in the Temple, the Inn to which ye have belonged. Is it credible,

therefore, to your Lordships, that the secrets of my conscience touching the oath, which I never would reveal, after the statute once made, either to the King's Grace himself, nor to any of you, my honourable Lords, I should have thus lightly blurted out in private parley with Mr. Rich?"

In short, the villain made not good his point; nevertheless, the issue of this black day was aforehand fixed; my Lord Audley was primed with a virulent and venomous speech; the jury retired and presently returned with a verdict of guilty; for they knew what the king's Grace would have them do in that case.

Up starts my Lord Audley;—commences pronouncing judgment, when—

"My Lord," says Father, "in my time, the custom in these cases was ever to ask the prisoner before sentence, whether he could give any reason why judgment should not proceed against him."

My Lord, in some confusion, puts the question. And then came the frightful sentence.

Yes, yes, my soul, I know; there were Saints of old sawn asunder. Men of whom the world was not worthy.

. . . Then he spake unto them his mind; and bade his judges and accusers farewell, hoping that

like as St. Paul was present and consenting unto St. Stephen's death, and yet both were now holy saints in heaven, so he and they might speedily meet there, joint heirs of everlasting salvation.

Meantime, poor Bess and Cecily, spent with grief and long waiting, were forced to be carried home by Heron, or ever Father returned to his prison. Was it less feeling, or more strength of body, enabled me to bide at the Tower wharf with Dancey? God knoweth. They brought him back by water; my poor sisters must have passed him. . . . The first thing I saw was the axe, *turned with its edge towards him*—my first note of his sentence. I forced my way through the crowd . . . some one laid a cold hand on mine arm; 'twas poor Patteson, so changed I scarce knew him, with a rosary of gooseberries he kept running through his fingers. He saith, "Bide your time, Mistress Meg; when he comes past, I'll make a passage for ye; . . . Oh, Brother, Brother! what ailed thee to refuse the oath? I've taken it!" In another moment, "Now, Mistress, now!" and flinging his arms right and left, made a breach through which I darted, fearless of bills and halberds, and did cast mine arms about Father's neck. He cries, "My Meg!" and hugs me to him as though our very souls should grow together. He saith,

"Bless thee, bless thee! Enough, enough, my child; what mean ye, to weep and break mine heart? Remember, though I die innocent, 'tis not without the will of God, who could have turned mine enemies' hearts, if 'twere best; therefore possess your soul in patience. Kiss them all for me, thus and thus . . ." so gave me back into Dancey's arms, the guards about him all weeping; but I could not thus lose sight of him for ever; so, after a minute's pause, did make a second rush, brake away from Dancey, clave to Father again, and again they had pity on me, and made pause while I hung upon his neck. This time there were large drops standing on his dear brow; and the big tears were swelling into his eyes. He whispered, "Meg, for Christ's sake don't unman me; thou'lt not deny my last request?" I said, "Oh! no," and at once loosened mine arms. "God's blessing be with you," he saith with a last kiss. I could not help crying, "My Father, my Father!" "The Chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof," he vehemently whispers, pointing upwards with so passionate a regard, that I look up, almost expecting a beatific vision; and when I turn about again, he's gone, and I have no more sense nor life till I find myself again in mine own chamber, my sister chafing my hands.

July 5th.

All's over now . . . they've done their worst, and yet I live. There were women could stand aneath the Cross. The Maccabees! Mother—. . . yes, my soul, yes; I know—nought but unpardoned sin. . . .

The Chariot of Israel!

6th.

Dr. Clement hath been with us. Saith he went up as blythe as a bridegroom to be clothed upon with immortality.

Rupert stood it all out. Perfect love casteth out fear. So did his.

17th.

. . . . . .

My most precious treasure is this dear billet, writ with a coal; the last thing he set his hand to, wherein he saith, "I never liked your manner towards me, better than when you kissed me last."

19th.

They have let us bury his poor mangled trunk; but, as sure as there's a sun in heaven, I'll have his head! before another sun hath risen, too. If wise

men won't speed me, I'll even content me with a fool.

I do think men, for the most part, be cowards in their hearts . . . moral cowards. Here and there, we find one like Father, and like Socrates,—and like . . . this and that one, I mind not their names just now; but in the main, methinketh they lack the moral courage of women. Maybe, I'm unjust to them just now, being cross.

July 20th.

. . . . . .

I lay down, but my heart was waking. Soon after the first cock crew, I heard a pebble cast against my lattice, knew the signal, rose, dressed, stole softly down and let myself out. I knew the touch of the poor fool's fingers; his teeth were chattering, 'twixt cold and fear, yet he laughed aneath his breath as he caught my arm and dragged me after him, whispering, "Fool and fair lady will cheat them yet." At the stairs lay a wherry with a couple of boatmen, and one of them stepping up to me, cries, "Alas for ruth, Mistress Meg, what is't ye do? Art mad to go on this errand?"

I said, "I shall be mad if I go not and succeed too,—put me in, and push off."

We went down the river quietly enough. At length reached London Bridge stairs. Patteson, starting up, says, "Bide ye all as ye are," and springs aland and runneth up to the bridge. Anon, returns, and saith, "Now, Mistress, all's ready . . . readier than ye wist . . . come up quickly, for the coast's clear." Hobson (for 'twas he) helps me forth, saying, "God speed ye, Mistress. . . and I dared, I would go with ye." . . . Thought I, there be others in that case.

Nor looked I up aneath the bridge-gate, when casting upward a fearsome look, I beheld the dark outline of the ghastly yet precious relic; and, falling into a tremour, did wring my hands and exclaim, "Alas, alas, that head hath lain many a time in my lap, would God, would God it lay there now!" When, on a sudden, I saw the pole tremble and sway towards me; and stretching forth my apron, I did in ecstasy of gladness, pity and horror, catch its burthen as it fell. Patteson, shuddering, yet grinning, cries under his breath, "Managed I not well, Mistress? Let's speed away with our theft, for fools and their treasures are soon parted; but I think not they'll follow hard after us, neither, for there are well-wishers to us on the bridge. I'll put ye into the boat and then say, God speed ye, Lady, with your burthen."

Rizpah, daughter of Aiah, did watch her dead from the beginning of harvest until the later rain, and suffered neither the birds of the air to light on them by day, nor the wild beasts of the field by night. And it was told the king, but he intermeddled not with her.

Argia stole Polynices' body by night and buried it, for the which, she with her life did willingly pay forfeit. Antigone, for aiding in the pious theft, was adjudged to be buried alive. Artemisia did make herself her loved one's shrine, by drinking his ashes. Such is the love of women ; many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. I've heard Bonvisi tell of a poor Italian girl, whose brothers did slay her lover ; and in spite of them she got his heart, and buried it in a pot of basil, which she watered day and night with her tears, just as I do my coffer. Will has promised it shall be buried with me, laid upon my heart, and since then, I've been easier.

He thinks he shall write Father's life, when he gets more composed, and we are settled in a new home. We are to be cleared out of this in all haste ; the king grutches at our lingering over Father's footsteps and gazing on the dear familiar scenes associated with his image ; and yet, when the news of the bloody deed

was taken to him, as he sat playing at tables with Queen Anne, he started up and scowled at her, saying, "Thou art the cause of this man's death!" Father might well say, during our last precious meeting in the Tower, "'Tis I, Meg, not the king, that love women. They belie him; he only loves himself." Adding, with his own sweet smile, "Your Gaffer used to say that women were a bag of snakes, and that the man who put his hand therein would be lucky if he found one eel among them all; but 'twas only in sport, Meg, and he owned that I had enough eels to my share to make a goodly pie, and called my house the eel-pie house to the day of his death. 'Twas our Lord Jesus raised up women, and showed kindness unto them; and they've kept their level, in the main, ever since."

I wish Will may set down everything of Father's saying he can remember; how precious will his book then be to us! But I fear me, these matters adhere not to a man's memory . . . he'll be telling of his doings as Speaker and Chancellor, and his saying this and that in Parliament. Those are the matters that men like to write and to read; he won't write it after my fashion.

I had a misgiving of Will's wrath, especially if I failed; but he called me his brave Judith. Indeed I

was a woman bearing a head, but one that had oft lain on my shoulder.

My thoughts begin to have connexion now ; but till last night, I slept not. 'Twas scarce sunset. Mercy had been praying beside me, and I lay outside my bed, inclining rather to stupor than sleep. On a sudden, I have an impression that some one is leaning over me, though I hear them not, nor feel their breath. I start up, cry, "Mercy!" but she's not there, nor any one else. I turn on my side and become heavy to sleep ; but or ere I drop quite off, I'm sensible or apprehensive of some living consciousness between my closed eyelids and the setting sunlight ; again start up and stare about, but there's nothing. Then I feel like . . . like Eli, maybe, when the child Samuel came to him twice ; and tears well into mine eyes, and I close them again, and say in mine heart, "If he's at hand, oh, let me see him next time . . . the third time's lucky." But, instead of this, I fall into quiet, balmy, dreamless sleep. Since then, I've had an abiding, assuring sense of help, of a hand upholding me, and smoothing and glibing the way before me.

We must yield to the powers that be. At this present, we are weak, but they are strong ; they are honourable, but we are despised. They have made

us a spectacle unto the world, and, I think, Europe will ring with it ; but at this present hour, they will have us forth of our home, though we have as yet no certain dwelling-place, and must flee as scared pigeons from their dove-cots. No matter ; our men are willing to labour, and our women to endure ; being reviled, we bless ; being persecuted, we suffer it. Only I marvel how any honest man, coming after us, will be able to eat a mouthful of bread with a relish within these walls. And, methinketh, a dishonest man will have sundry frights from the *lares* and *lemures*. There'll be dearth of black beans in the market.

Flow on, bright shining Thames. A good brave man hath walked aforetime on your margent, himself as bright and useful, and delightsome as be you, sweet river. And like you, he never murmured ; like you, he upbore the weary, and gave drink to the thirsty, and reflected heaven in his face. I'll not swell your full current with any more fruitless tears. There's a river, whose streams make glad the City of our God. He now rests beside it. Good Christian folks, as they hereafter pass this spot, upborne on thy gentle tide, will, maybe, point this way and say—"There dwelt Sir Thomas More" ; but whether they do or not, *vox populi* is a very inconsiderable matter. Who

would live on their breath? They hailed St. Paul as Mercury, and then stoned him, and cast him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. Their favourite of to-day may, for what they care, go hang himself to-morrow in his surcingle. Thus it must be while the world lasts; and the very racks and screws wherewith they aim to overcome the nobler spirit, only test and reveal its power of exaltation above the heaviest gloom of circumstance.

Interfecistis, interfecistis hominem omnium Anglorum optimum.

FINIS

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